MAPLE LEAF FOODS AND THE GOVERNANCE OF FOOD INSECURITY

by © Heidi M.A. Janes

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of the Canadian corporation Maple Leaf Foods Inc. in 'food insecurity (FI) governance', defined as attempts by elite actors to situate themselves in powerful roles that promote treating the 'condition' of FI rather than addressing its structural roots. Drawing from literature on charitable food provisioning, three features of FI governance are identified as 1) locating FI within the bounds of 'insecure' populations, 2) ignoring power disparities, and 3) disregarding corporations' positions in the political economy of FI. Through Clapp and Fuchs' (2009) framework of corporate power in global agrifood governance, I explore how strategies of instrumental, structural, and discursive power have helped Maple Leaf gain legitimacy and authority in the food system, and are now used to bolster its charitable arm, the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security. Additionally, theories of strategic ignorance and philanthrocapitalism illuminate the Centre's philanthropy as facilitating multistakeholderism in Canadian food policy. I show how Maple Leaf is governing FI through a Centre that upholds undemocratic approaches to FI solutions that further its corporate aims and shape policymaking agendas that are least likely to disrupt the food system status quo.

General Summary

This thesis traces the role of Maple Leaf Foods Inc. in policymaking and governance spheres related to food insecurity (FI). Based on previous scholars' work examining how food charity tends to reinforce structures that create FI, I explore how corporate philanthropy has constructed new spaces for food corporations like Maple Leaf to exert power. I discuss how their strategies to gain authority and legitimacy through instrumental, structural, and discursive power (Clapp and Fuchs, 2009) as a large food corporation and philanthropic actor has allowed Maple Leaf to exercise considerable control over shaping the solutions to FI in Canada. I connect the theories of strategic ignorance and philanthrocapitalism to show how the notion of multistakeholderism has emerged as an undemocratic governing structure promoted by corporations in the food system. I argue that Maple Leaf governs FI in order to promote policies that encourage further growth of its corporate operations.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction: Recognizing Multistakeholders Equally?

On October 19, 2021, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Maple Leaf Foods Inc. (hereafter referred to as "Maple Leaf"), Michael McCain, published an op-ed in the online publication Policy Magazine titled 'Bold, Transformative Change Needed to Reduce Food Insecurity in Canada'. In it, he urged the federal government to "set a goal to reduce food insecurity by 50 percent by 2030" (McCain, 2021). Three months later, on January 14, 2022, McCain published the column 'We Need a New Charter for Capitalism, and Here's What it Should Include', this time in the Financial Post. "I believe the capitalism we have been born into,…has delivered extraordinary outcomes for humanity", he wrote, followed by six "themes" for a "new 'Charter for Capitalism'" that include "recogniz[ing] multi-stakeholders equally" and "redefin[ing] human rights" (McCain, 2022). He states, "I would never advocate turning our back" on capitalism itself. Importantly, he writes, this view is "one of value creation that we are pursuing at Maple Leaf Foods, one that sees great business opportunity by channeling our resources to tackle the monumental social and environmental issues of our time, including our climate crisis and food insecurity". Contrasted with the October call in Policy Magazine for government to "act now" to "catalyze commitment, progress and accountability", his second piece advocates for "efficient and effective" government regulation, "delivered by more cost-sensitive governments to avoid waste". In one area he has developed six bulleted recommendations, the other he calls for undefined 'action' to be taken over the span of a decade. One requires "bold, transformative change" (McCain, 2021), the other only slight changes to its current situation.

In these two pieces, McCain demonstrates how food insecurity (FI) is currently governed in Canada, or as Marks (2019, p.1) writes, "the water in which policymakers have learned to swim". 'Multistakeholderism' is the doorway through which powerful actors, such as McCain, enter the

arena with promises of 'transformation' and an orientation towards 'action', along with the resources to catalyze both. The FI governance model, as I will show, leaves capitalism unchallenged. What has emerged is an ecosystem of so-called 'equal stakeholders', or "webs of influence" (Marks, 2019, p.67), convening in policy spaces together to work on solutions to an issue centered around a 'lack' of food access in a country with otherwise 'extraordinary outcomes'. Curiously, the status of key stakeholders such as McCain and Maple Leaf as some of the largest beneficiaries of the status quo has not brought into question their motivation, or true commitment, for "bold, transformative change" to occur. Scholars have highlighted the 'problem of corporate power in the food system' (Clapp, 2021), but their philanthropic endeavours remain relatively understudied. Meanwhile, as this thesis will show, for food corporations like Maple Leaf, food insecurity resembles an opportunity to conduct business, and as such, an area to exert power in order to govern.

In this thesis, I explore what it means to have a shared interest in finding solutions to food insecurity through the communications of a corporate entity that has loudly claimed its stake in the issue, Maple Leaf. I examine for whom exactly 'value' is created when food insecurity is viewed as a site to be governed, and in what ways Maple Leaf has inserted itself into a food policy governance role through its corporate philanthropy. Drawing from Clapp and Fuchs' (2009) framework of corporate power in global agrifood governance, I show how strategies Maple Leaf has used in its business operations to gain legitimacy and authority in the food system are now applied to its charitable work. Additionally, theories of strategic ignorance (McGoey, 2019) and philanthrocapitalism (McGoey, 2015; McGoey, Thiel, & West, 2018), help to illuminate Maple Leaf's philanthropy as a window through which multistakeholderism (Raymond & Denardis, 2015; McKeon, 2017; Marks, 2019) has gained momentum in Canadian food policy, and the consequences of treating powerful corporate actors in the food system as equal stakeholders to its

eaters. Further, building on linkages between 'social license to operate' (SLO) and extractive industry survival (Mayes, 2015), I analyze how the shared value that Maple Leaf found in food insecurity emerged through processes borne from negotiations of on-going threats to the company's 'future-proof' financial success. Finally, I contextualize the work of the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security (hereafter referred to as "the Centre") as an extension of Maple Leaf's operations within what has become the governance of food insecurity.

1.2 Area and Context of Study

According to Health Canada (2020), food insecurity is "the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so". The federal government has been "measuring" food insecurity at the household level since 2005 through the Canadian Community Health Survey's (CCHS) Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM). Based on 18 questions spanning from worrying about not having enough food, a reliance on low-cost foods, and not eating, among others, respondents' households are classified as either "food secure", "marginally food insecure", "moderately food insecure", or "severely food insecure". The questions always have the qualifier of these various scenarios of deprivation as being specifically "because there wasn't enough money to buy food". Since 2018, the HFSSM has been included on the Canadian Income Survey (CIS), and it is widely accepted that food insecurity is definitively an issue of income (Tung, Rose-Redwood, & Cloutier, 2022). In Canada, rates of food insecurity have remained high over the past decade, with "little indication that this problem is getting better" (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020, p.3). The latest national data reflected 15.9 per cent, or 4.8 million people, living in 'food insecure households' and reporting compromises on, and a preoccupation with, the quality or quantity of their food intake due to financial constraints (Caron & Plunkett-Latimer, 2022).

The context of this study begins in a recent culmination of multistakeholderism in national food policy governance expressed through the appointment of a "multi-disciplinary group" called the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council (hereafter referred to as "the Advisory Council"). This was the result of the *ad hoc* Working Group on Food Policy Governance. Notably, despite "long-standing differences among food system stakeholders" members of this Group "found new ways of working together" (Andrée, Ballamingie, & Coulas, 2021, p.197). Though not an analysis of the Canadian Food Policy (FPC) itself, this thesis examines the governing of FI through the entanglement of Maple Leaf in food policy, specifically leading up to the creation of the Advisory Council (WGFPG, 2017b). For example, two long-standing Maple Leaf executives and four others who at the time were, or later became, board members of its charitable arm were part of the *ad hoc* Working Group, and three of these individuals were then appointed to the Advisory Council itself. This presents a puzzle of exactly how disparate groups and individuals "found new ways of working together" as government promised movement on food policy in 2015 (Andrée et al., 2021, p.197), and of what kind of corporation Maple Leaf is to have been welcomed into decision-making spaces regarding food policy. Further, it is an investigation of the Centre as a multistakeholder initiative itself, and the implications of its role in the governing of FI in Canada.

As noted by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) last July (Clapp et al., 2021), "attempts to replace democratic multilateral governance of food systems with control by a handful of powerful actors is nothing new" (p.12). The United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) pushed the issue of multistakeholderism in food systems to the world stage through the inclusion of the largest corporations and foundations in the world, and in turn was heavily critiqued by dissenting scholars and civil society groups (IPES-Food, 2021; Chandrasekaran et al., 2021; Canfield, Anderson, & McMichael, 2021). Indeed, an incisive chronology by Valente (2021) gives compelling evidence that multistakeholderism in global food

governance has been an on-going project by corporate and philanthropic actors for decades. Though as Marks (2019) points out, multistakeholder initiatives often involve local and national governments, as well as intergovernmental organizations, blurring distinctions between partnership at national and international levels. Valente (2021), Marks (2019), and others have also implicated philanthropic foundations as a vehicle through which industry power infiltrates democratic institutions in nutrition and food policy spheres. In this thesis, I examine Maple Leaf's specific philanthropic investment in the issue of 'food insecurity', and the connections between philanthrocapitalism and multistakeholderism at its various levels of governance.

While I go more in depth in Chapter 3 regarding two internal 'crises' face by Maple Leaf that catalyzed an interest into sustainability generally, around the same time the Canadian food industry at large was facing its own crisis of credibility. As I show in Chapter 5, civil society and activist groups were becoming increasingly critical of corporate pushes for an industry-led 'food strategy' in contrast to grassroots efforts by Food Secure Canada (FSC) to platform their People's Food Policy Project between 2008-2011 (see Martin & Andrée, 2017, for a detailed analysis of governmentalities within this movement itself). Then in 2012, a visit to Canada from the United Nations' (UN) Special Rapporteur on the right to food resulted in a critical evaluation of issues such as "short-sighted agricultural policies" in a report that "made headlines around the world" (FSC, 2013). In the report, under the heading 'The situation of food insecurity', Olivier De Schutter noted that "the gaps between those living in poverty and the middle- and high-income segments of the population are widening" (HRC, 2012, p.4). Additionally, regarding 'Food availability: agricultural policies', De Schutter reported that Canada has been "moving to large-scale, input-intensive modes of production, leading to increasingly unsustainable farming practices and higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions, soil contamination, and erosion of biodiversity" (HRC, 2012, p.7). The Special Rapporteur also identified concerns that following the free-trade agreement with

the United States (US) in 1989 and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, export-led policies have resulted in "increased concentration, vertical integration and buyer consolidation in the agrifood sector" (HRC, 2012, p.8). "Trade liberalization", De Schutter wrote, "has been detrimental to many of Canada's agricultural producers, whose net incomes have decreased and whose debt has increased dramatically over the past decades" (HRC, 2012, p.8).

Further, the Special Rapporteur critiqued industry-led self-regulation around the issue of marketing unhealthy foods to children, and noted a tendency for stores in low-income areas to "squeez[e] the poorest households to purchase processed foods high in saturated fats, sugars, and sodium that are often more affordable" (HRC, 2012, pp.14-15). Moreover, De Schutter admonished the heavy reliance on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) in Canada, stating that "a marginalized category has been created essentially in order to compensate for the increased concentration in the farming sector" (HRC, 2012, p.9). De Schutter then noted that "a thriving small-scale farming sector is essential to local food systems, which food policy councils and localities throughout Canada now seek to strengthen" (HRC, 2012, p.9). However, he identified "other significant obstacles in transitioning to more sustainable and decentralized food systems", first being highly capital-intensive measures in the meat-packing industry that "mak[e] it uneconomic for smaller abattoirs to operate due to the high overhead and debt-servicing costs these investments entail" (HRC, 2012, p.9). The Special Rapporteur also stated that to facilitate the right to food, the minimum legislated wage should be, at least, a "living wage", that "provides an income allowing workers to support themselves and their families" (HRC, 2012, p.12). According to the report, minimum wage should consider "the needs of workers and their families, taking into account the general level of wages in the country, the cost of living, social security benefits, and the relative living standards of other social groups" (HRC, 2012, p.21). As is illuminated in the following chapters, each of these areas, namely low-wage employment, export-oriented agriculture

policies, capital-intensive meat-processing, and processed foods marketed to families, are critical aspects of Maple Leaf's business, even now a decade later.

This analysis has led me to describe what began occurring following this report as the 'governance of food insecurity (FI)' in Canada by corporations like Maple Leaf. I define FI governance as attempts by elite actors or groups to treat the condition and symptoms of FI, by positioning themselves in powerful roles aimed at controlling the narrative regarding its causes and solutions. As I will describe in more length in the next chapter, a key feature of corporate power in global governance is the desire to set the very rules that attempt to regulate corporations' operations. Through several different strategies, explained in more detail below, corporations tend to infiltrate policymaking spaces that may impact the profitability of their business. While this does not immediately signal Maple Leaf's and other food corporations' interest in *food* policy as unusual, their reasons for having presence in food *insecurity* spaces is less clear when considering that even Maple Leaf contends that more "food will not solve food insecurity" (MLF, 2022a). Yet, as its corporate discourse also communicates, food *insecurity* is now a space where they see an opportunity to influence policymaking.

To explain this influence and the intent behind it, I have identified three distinctions that exemplify the governance of FI. First, it tends to locate the source of FI within the boundaries of so-called 'insecure' populations, dividing off subsections of individuals into groups of 'others'. Second, it ignores, whether deliberately or unintentionally, the power differentials in this dynamic. Third, there is an absence of acknowledgement of the governing party's own role or position in the structural and societal sources of FI. This ensures that policymaking in the spaces being governed, as Nisbett et al. (2021, p.1) put it, "leads to a failure to ask questions of why so many people, for so long, have been 'held back'".

As I show, Maple Leaf's philanthropy itself mirrors tactics typically attributed to corporate exercises of power to assert their role in setting the FI agenda in Canada. These include enforcing privately set rules, framing the problem and its solutions in public and academic discourse, and pre-setting policy options. I differentiate this from mere corporate power alone since it operates within its own sphere of influence, and because the aims of other actors in these webs tend to be in tension with Maple Leaf's business itself, as many of the above recommendations by the UN's Special Rapporteur are. FI thus has been transformed into a 'sector' where Maple Leaf has claimed a powerful role, keen to govern the activities of civil society actors, government officials, and eaters themselves. As Marks (2019, p.143) concludes regarding the growing role of multistakeholderism in policymaking: "we must…acknowledge that something is wrong with the water".

1.3 Research Goal, Objectives, Questions

Through this research, I will contextualize Maple Leaf and the Centre's work in the governance of FI in Canada. Specifically, I am interested in examining the motivations for companies like Maple Leaf to position themselves as being part of the solution to problems borne from a food system that they already have considerable influence over (Lacy-Nichols & Williams, 2021). In particular, I am curious about Maple Leaf's involvement in strengthening a so-called "food security sector" (MLF, 2016) in Canada, through which industry, government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have formed alliances that serve to smooth out their relative power differences. I will show how individuals like Maple Leaf's CEO, McCain, have framed the problem of FI "in a country of such wealth and abundance" while leaving their own wealth free from inquiry (MLF, 2016). Building on Andrew Fisher's (2017) landmark work denoting the alliance between corporate America and anti-hunger groups as its very own industry, dubbed "Big Hunger", I begin to paint a picture of the big business that is FI in Canada.

As McCain himself has written to Maple Leaf shareholders (MLF, 2019), the philosophy behind the Centre's work is "in contrast" to traditional "philanthropy and corporate social responsibility" that "focus on "giving back". Instead, he sees the company's "pursuit of shared value creation" as "seek[ing] a meaningful role in solving social problems where we have a unique capability to engage". I approach this idea of shared value with curiosity, asking in the following pages for whom exactly it is being created. My goal is to examine this "pursuit of shared value creation", as well as examine how McCain has differentiated himself from other philanthropists. Additionally, I compared Maple Leaf's corporate practices and strategies with those that it applies to the Centre in order to contextualize its role in FI governance. The overarching thesis question is in what ways are Maple Leaf's corporate activities and aims related to the work undertaken through the Centre? Second, what are the implications for these connections on FI in Canada, and specifically, for those that Maple Leaf seeks to govern?

To explain these relationships, I connect the governance of FI to the emerging literature on multistakeholderism that show how the term 'stakeholder' is now being repurposed by corporations in realms where they may be adversely affected by policies under development (Marks, 2019). These initiatives based in 'inclusion' and 'partnership' tend to involve government agencies, intergovernmental organizations, industry, academia, and civil society organizations (CSOs). Additionally, I connect this to recent developments in ignorance studies that refer to the notion of 'ignorance alibis', as obscuring one's involvement in causing harm to others (McGoey, 2019). Further, I build on historical and contemporary concepts of 'philanthrocapitalism', in order to make sense of how power operates in charitable spaces and how these spaces have transformed into sites of governance. Together, these frameworks offer explanations for the consequences of allowing food corporations into spaces that seek to govern the FI policy agenda.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

In order to understand how Maple Leaf Foods came to be influential in FI governance, I will first situate the corporation within food governance more broadly. Clapp and Fuchs' (2009) theory of corporate power in the global food system offers an initial framework that moves past conceptualizing power as market share alone. Instead, they argue that food corporations rely upon three distinct but overlapping dimensions of power in order to increasingly set the very rules that govern the industry. According to Clapp and Fuchs (2009), instrumental, structuralist, and discursive power are difficult to separate since they interact with and enhance each other. Yet, analyzing them as uniquely significant allows for a richer analysis of the presence and exercise of power in the absence of observable conflicts of interest. By examining the distinct ways that Maple Leaf has wielded power in the Canadian food system prior to moving explicitly into the "sustainable food security" (MLF, 2016) policy arena, we can begin to unpack how it came to have considerable influence in both. However, Clapp and Fuchs' discussion of food system governance is rooted in the perspective that transnational corporations thrive on distance, both social and physical, between the production and consumption of food. This cannot fully explain a newly emerging version of 'philanthrocapitalism' that companies like Maple Leaf are now approaching policy spaces from, wherein they claim "deep involvement" in solving problems in the system they already have a great deal of power over.

Here, McGoey's theory of strategic ignorance (2019) helps to explain why expertise in the industrial food system has unquestionably been accepted into realms oriented toward alleviating FI. As McGoey (2019) explains, strategic ignorance is a "deliberat[e] mobiliz[ation] and exploit[ation] [of] the problem of ignorance and the 'unknown' as a rhetorical weapon in order to gain more power and legitimacy" (p.70). As I cover in the next chapter, the many competing discourses through which researchers have approached FI have unnecessarily complicated the issue

to the extent that food corporations have been able mobilize the 'gaps' that seemingly persist in our knowledge on the subject. Additionally, McGoey (2019, p.40) argues that "social power (as well as the socially powerful) sets agendas for what is known and what is not known". In later chapters, I recount the interactions between disparate groups, including Maple Leaf, that show the corporation shoring up social capital in the lead up to Canada's first national food policy. Through "half truths taken as the whole" (McGoey, 2019, p.88), what emerges from the Centre's work is akin to "a doctrine of deliberate anti-visibility" (McGoey, 2019, p.87) of the role of the food industry itself in perpetuating the political economic roots of food insecurity in Canada (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019). Combining the two frameworks for explaining elite and corporate power brings about a clearer picture of two phenomenons—namely philanthrocapitalism and multistakeholderism—that are not new strategies in themselves, but that together are taking on a renewed and powerful form of authority over FI governance.

Where these frameworks may prove insufficient, I build on existing literature that has produced snapshots of infiltration of the non-profit sector by other corporations (Fisher, 2017; Riches, 2018). By foregrounding FI in Canada against the background of the global food system and its parallel issue of corporations' agendas being advanced through powerful networks (IPES-Food, 2021), I also build on Raphael et al.'s (2018) work connecting the cultural hegemony of discourse within national associations concerned with chronic diseases in Canada and their corporate board memberships. This analysis will situate Maple Leaf within work that has examined the defusing nature of philanthropic engagement on social movements in food insecurity (Gürcan, 2015; Tung, 2020; Möller, 2019). Additionally, enlisting 'Marx as a food theorist' (Foster, 2016) will help contextualize FI as a requisite of capitalism, reinforcing the need to confront the political economic underpinnings behind philanthrocapitalism (McGoey, 2021) in food industries.

1.5 Methodology

Approaching the issue of food insecurity through a study of powerful corporate actors, especially as it pertains to their philanthropic activities, is under-utilized in academic work. Too often, as I will discuss further in the next chapter, the site of inquiry in Canadian FI literature is staunchly set on insecure populations and their interactions with the food system, rather than the political economic infrastructure and actors upholding the system itself. Further, examining corporate actors through discourse shared across their various communication strategies, interviews with news outlets, and other public-facing rhetoric, is a rich source of information about how the food system is shaped and governed (see Murphy, Burch, & Clapp, 2012 for 'secrets' revealed through this approach). Rather than philanthropy as an 'inevitability' (Shiva, 2022), describing the mechanisms through which corporations have engaged with charitable food initiatives gives a glimpse into where such an imperative originated from. Rather than taking their word for it, food corporations' self-appointed role as part of the solution to FI must be contextualized against their role in the food system as a whole in order to understand the full extent of the connections.

For these reasons, I began with a historical analysis of Maple Leaf as a company. First, I examined the current Maple Leaf website to grasp how it describes itself today, where it is currently operating, what its core products are, and who it employs. Second, I traced business strategies through Annual Reports from 1995 to 2022, being the year the current owners purchased the company up to and including the present day. Third, I compared the investor relations discourse in these financial reports to newspaper articles published each year within the same timeframe, with the keywords 'Maple Leaf Foods' along with additional keywords such as 'labour', 'strike', 'wages', 'charity', or 'listeriosis'. Fourth, I searched the video-sharing platform YouTube.com for video resources, as recorded talks and speeches given by prominent corporate actors can often be

found there, as well as video advertisements and other marketing materials created by companies. I also used the networking website LinkedIn.com for information about individuals employed by the company, specifically job titles and descriptions that gave additional context where official Maple Leaf communications lacked. Finally, I used the digital library of internet sites, the Internet Archive housed at Archive.org, in order to view snapshots of previous versions of websites including Maple Leaf's own, as well as other organizations I examined such as the J.W. McConnell Foundation, Food Secure Canada, and the Conference Board of Canada.

Next, in order to contrast Maple Leaf as a corporation with its charity work, I undertook a similar historical analysis of the Centre first through its own website, FeedingOpportunity.com, as well as its press releases and social media campaigns. Second, I traced the formation of the *ad hoc* Working Group on Food Policy by investigating key actors' and organizations' engagement in 'food policy' spheres since the notion gained traction from 2011 onward by examining policy documents, news articles, and blog posts from those entities involved. Third, I accessed the Centre's registered charity details on the Canada Revenue Agency website, including lists of its qualified donees and other financial information detailed in its T3010 filings. Fourth, I searched the websites of each of the donees listed for 'Maple Leaf' in order to locate additional details about the programs their donations supported. Finally, I compiled, categorized, and analyzed this information alongside the extensive literature on food insecurity as a whole in order to provide a critical dissection of the past three decades of the Canadian food system with Maple Leaf as the focal point.

1.6 Structure of Thesis

Chapter 2 begins with situating the present study within the terrain of FI scholarship, while identifying gaps in how that literature engages with corporate power. Specifically, I approach the vast body of FI literature through the framework of competing discourses (Mendly-Zambo &

Raphael, 2019) that have emerged. Then, I examine the work that takes the consequences of charitable approaches seriously, while establishing a need for incorporating the role of specific corporations into our understanding of how food charity has been appropriated. Next, I explore work on the phenomenons of philanthrocapitalism and multistakeholderism in global governance, including how these dynamics are presently showing up in food governance spheres (Valente, 2021; McKeon, 2017; Marks, 2019). Finally, I conclude by suggesting more research that further describes FI as located within the "food insecure" individual is no longer helpful, rather that we must interrogate new processes in the food system through which elite and corporate actors accumulate power.

Chapter 3 begins with a brief history of Maple Leaf Foods Inc., from its origins in industrial scale milling in Canada and Canada Packers Limited, to its current operations in Canada, the United States, Japan, and elsewhere. Importantly, I explore a pivotal change in Maple Leaf's communications following two major events in its corporate history, namely the Listeriosis outbreak in 2008 and the takeover attempt of West Face Capital Inc. in 2010. I note the crisis management strategy that emerged from this era that precluded its "fixing stage" (AWB, 2021), namely one that aimed to, above all else, control the narrative. I then introduce the 'sustainability' rhetoric that emerged following these events to begin to make sense of the origins of the Centre as another way to exploit "new revenue" and "discover new markets to penetrate" (BBA, 2022a).

Chapter 4 focuses on the development of the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security, and those who have been involved over the years. First, I interrogate the idea of shared value upon which much of the Centre's communications hinge upon, and connect it to the corporate concept of 'social license to operate' (SLO). Next, I expand on the idea of a food security *sector*, and begin to relate this to Maple Leaf's business motivations for getting involved in FI governance. Then, I analyze the expertise of those who make up the Centre's Board of Directors, as well as that

of its supporters. What emerges is a group of individuals who have deep expertise in the business of food that constrains what it possible in terms of its advocacy and other work.

Chapter 5 is a look at the consequences of those constraints, showing how the Centre is shaping the questions that are now being asked about FI in Canada. I discuss the lead up to Maple Leaf's involvement with the *ad hoc* Working Group that eventually led to the appointment of the Centre's Chair to the Food Policy Advisory Council. I explore the type of FI research that is being funded by the Centre, and how academia's complicity with corporate involvement in FI solutions bolsters its legitimacy. I then briefly examine of the type of work receiving direct financial donations from the Centre, finding that overwhelmingly its 'qualified donees' are the very charities that Maple Leaf argues will not fix the problem.

Chapter 6 will synthesize the research in a concluding discussion that asks whether the benevolence of Maple Leaf is the true motivator behind its recent emphasis on charity. Finally, I think through food insecurity as relational in order to imagine possibilities where food corporations and their charitable foundations are no longer upheld as part of food system transformation, but ripe for dismantling as symbols of the last barrier standing between eaters and food justice.

1.7 Significance of Research

A consensus is gaining momentum among scholars, activists, and advocacy organizations concerned with food insecurity that corporate power in the global food system must be addressed. Culminating on an international level in response to the recent UNFSS (Canfield, Anderson & McMichael, 2021; Nisbett et al., 2021), the call for challenging corporations' role in so-called food security solutions has also emerged in Canada recently (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019; Azadian et al., 2022; Mendly-Zambo, Raphael, & Taman, 2021). Further, sociologists have recently identified private foundations as "shap[ing] the political field" of environmental NGOs in Canada (Carroll, Graham & Shakespear, 2021). The emergence of a Food Policy Advisory Council that

appears to be both shaped and governed in part by Maple Leaf's and other corporate interests, reveals the urgent need to interrogate who is shaping the political field of FI governance in the country.

I argue that through activities related to their philanthrocapitalism, Maple Leaf uses strategies that foster instrumental, structuralist, and discursive power (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009) to facilitate and promote an undemocratic FI governance structure. I will show that they do this in three ways, facilitated by strategic ignorance. First, by conflating food industry expertise with food insecurity expertise. Second, by selectively using evidence from academic research that further complicates the issue of food insecurity. Third, by framing the issue of food insecurity in a way that ensures the profits of Maple Leaf, its customers, and its peers are not adversely affected by its solutions. This study of Maple Leaf's moves into FI governance shows how multistakeholderism is more likely to facilitate the continuation of business as usual, reinforced by a philanthrocapitalist power that ensures the continued viability of the food system status quo.

There is a crucial dilemma facing the food system at this pivotal moment in time, one that Centre board member, Evan Fraser, has been quoted as saying requires "a reform to the entire global economy" (Bianco, 2020). Yet, the question remains whether philanthropic endeavours undertaken by corporations that benefit from the present global economic order share that enthusiasm for reform. It is also unclear whether multistakeholderism produces a democratic form of governance, raising even more questions about the implications on FI. This thesis is an inquiry into the nexus of alliances in Canadian food spaces, building on Mendly-Zambo and Raphael's (2019) proposition that effective responses to food insecurity now require researchers to mobilize the public to force governments to actively redistribute economic resources and power held by corporations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction: "A Daunting Amount of Food Insecurity Research"

Corporate power in the governance of food insecurity-focused spaces, expressed through a seemingly benevolent philanthropy, has not been adequately considered as a barrier to food access. While scholarship abounds on the issue of FI, the majority of work in the public health, nutrition, and related fields has produced a plethora of research locating the issue within the boundaries of a so-called insecure, vulnerable, or otherwise marginalized population. To date, despite building a foundation for understanding the factors that have a relationship with an individualized experience of FI, this research has not translated into effective political mobilization to urgently dismantle the structures that allow those determinants to persist. At the same time, philanthrocapitalists draw on this information to support their own initiatives. For example, a report and a paper from the authors at the University of Toronto's PROOF research team are linked on Maple Leaf's corporate website (MLF, 2022a). Further, even scholars who recognize the positively "daunting" (Long et al., 2020, p.12) amount of literature that is "dedicated to describing, explaining, predicting, and reducing" FI continue to conclude that more research is needed, on "coping mechanisms" and "culturally appropriate responses". And while these scholars identify the unlikely prospect for structural change to occur because "most economic and political elites tend to favour neoliberal capitalist solutions to problems of food insecurity" (Long et al., 2020, p.13)[1], it is rarely elites, such as corporations, and their role in 'solutions' that are the recommended targets for further inquiry.

[1] A similar sense of pessimism around the potential for change has been noted by Mendly-Zambo and Raphael in Silvasti and Riches' recent edited volume (2014), the editors commenting "the majority of authors express no hope for the possibility of progressive national politics and its capability to solve the hunger issue within the context of prevailing neoliberal economic policy" (p.204, as quoted in Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019, p.545).

My review of this substantial body of information ties together areas that have offered stepping stones toward a political economic critique of FI in order to situate this current study of Maple Leaf's specific flavour of "neoliberal capitalist solutions" (Long et al., 2021, p.13). First, I begin with a framework that categorizes the 'competing discourses' in the FI literature, and their consequences (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019). Second, I draw on contemporary critiques of food distribution programs, examining the tendency to foster governable subjectivities in and through their administration (Möller, 2021; Guthman, 2008a). Third, I discuss literature that focuses on corporate power in the food system (Clapp, 2021; Clapp & Fuchs, 2009), including in charitable spaces (Fisher, 2017; Riches; 2018; Azadian et al., 2022). Here, I incorporate McGoey's (2016) theory of strategic ignorance as the bridge that leads from philanthrocapitalism to multistakeholderism. Finally, taking inspiration from Möller's recent 'essay in refusal'[2] (2021), I conclude by arguing that the only remaining understudied populations in the 'puzzle' are corporate actors and their desire for governance of FI itself. Together, this will establish grounds for the remainder of this thesis wherein I interrogate food governance structures that overtly include corporations as 'equal stakeholders'.

2.2 Competing Discourses and their Consequences

The central argument of Scott-Smith's recent historical analysis of humanitarian approaches to hunger is that "the way one *conceives* of the empty stomach is a crucial determinant of how one actually treats it" (2020, p.10). By way of synthesizing the vast amount of literature on how we have come to conceive of FI in Canada, I draw from Mendly-Zambo and Raphael's (2019) analysis of five competing discourses used by researchers, advocates, and the public to explain its causes and how to address it. Derived from an extensive narrative review of the previous four

[2] I would be remiss not to mention discussions regarding ethnographic refusal during Dr. Robin Whitaker's Anthropology 6400 course as part of this inspiration as well.

decades of Canadian theoretical and empirical literature (see Mendly-Zambo, 2017), the authors found that "the majority of these discourses" serve only to "obscure the structural sources" of food insecurity (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019, p.536). In turn, this transforms it from a problem located within society to one that exists at the personal or community levels.

First, FI as an issue of nutrition and dietetics focuses on food choice behaviours and outcomes associated with nutritional deficiencies. As an "individualistic and depoliticized approach" (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019, p.540), this frames solutions through 'healthy lifestyle choices' such as "food literacy skills". Food insecurity is thus "medicalized", and treated, by an "apolitical", "hegemonic", and "scientistic" field of human nutrition that standardizes and decontextualizes the body from the "socio-spatial, political economic and cultural locations" in which it is embedded (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019, p.541). Indeed, Scott-Smith (2020, p.10) contends that "the past two centuries has seen a rationalization, individualization, and medicalization of the feeding process". Möller (2020, p.13) notes that this medicalization of poverty "always comes at a cost as it reduces political questions to the technical management of a life in constant crisis".

Next, Mendly-Zambo and Raphael (2019) separately critique discourses that centre charitable food responses, as well as food provisioning through 'community development'. However, I prefer Mendly-Zambo's (2017, p.36) original combination of these two approaches, arguing that community food gardens, kitchens, collective buying, and other feeding programs, including in schools, are yet "another component of the community traditionalist approach". They, and many others, argue that charitable feeding programs that fall under the umbrella of emergency food have become institutionalized and entrenched while giving the perception that FI is being adequately dealt with (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019; Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2015; Riches & Tarasuk, 2014; Tarasuk, Dachner, & Loopstra, 2014; Riches, 2018). Relatedly, programs aimed at

increasing the 'local food supply' through gardens, alternative markets, and 'fostering a sense of community' impede critical judgment of their true potential to address the issue (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019; see also: Tarasuk, 2001; Guthman, 2008a; Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2013; Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2009; Huisken, Orr, & Tarasuk, 2016; McClintock, 2014; Gorman, 2019; Spring, 2019). An astute analysis by Gorman (2019, p.5) refers to the modern practice of "providing fresh produce to the food insecure" as, put simply, "kinder and less just".

Fourth, FI approached as a social determinant of health (SDH) evokes a public policy-oriented advocacy response that centres the role of income (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019; Reeves, Loopstra, & Tarasuk, 2021). Proponents call for policymakers to increase incomes through minimum wage and social assistance policies, to provide affordable housing and childcare, or to administer employment and monitoring programs. Provisioning of an "adequate income" through any public policy means[3] is seen as "the only way to eliminate household food insecurity" (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019, p.544). Researchers approaching FI as an SDH issue tend to engage in 'pluralism', believing that policymaking is undertaken objectively and gives interests groups an equal opportunity to influence public policy (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019). Möller (2021, p.10) describes how this belief surfaces as "lived realities of the poor as exotic 'Others'…neatly presented on PowerPoint slides, followed by obligatory and well-rehearsed outrage at government failings"[4]. This discourse typically produces "empirical insight into the lives of the poor…coupled with the promise of empowerment and, naturally, the need for more research to learn more about the poor, their lifestyles and reasons for being in precarious positions" (Möller, p.10).

[3] See Raphael, Bryant, & Mendly-Zambo (2018) for the implications of this pluralism in terms of advocacy around the concept of 'basic income' as a solution to food insecurity.
[4] Here I would like to briefly acknowledge my own tendency to engage with the issue in such a manner before undertaking this work, and so I understand the allure of this approach.

Lastly, Mendly-Zambo and Raphael (2019, p.548) identify the critical materialist stream of political economy discourse as that which "best explains the current [food insecurity] situation in Canada and suggests the most effective means of responding to it". This framework, the one least utilized in the literature, is "explicitly concerned with the imbalances of influence and power amongst societal sectors that shapes…political and economic structures and processes" (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019, p.546). It moves beyond other discourses by identifying how the power and influence of specific sectors, namely corporate and business, create and benefit from the policies that cause millions of people to lack the financial resources to obtain food. They argue that tackling FI "requires political action that moves well beyond naïve notions of democratic public policymaking" (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019, p.548). Further, that researchers must "recognize and respond to the powerful interest groups which have placed their interests over the interests of the most vulnerable in Canada" (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019, p.548). In the fourth section, I turn to scholars who are doing just that. First though, I examine the charitable food imperative more closely, and its relationship to FI governance.

2.3 Food Charity, the Academic Gaze, and Governing the 'Other'

Nearly twenty-five years ago, sociologist Janet Poppendieck (1998) published *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement.* Since then, the text has been revered as an enduringly influential critique of the charitable food system (McIntyre et al., 2016). In *Sweet Charity?,* Poppendieck presents two important considerations for scholars interested in the problem of FI, yet only one has been seriously heeded. The first, a landmark description of the ways that the "moral safety valve" (Poppendieck, 1998, p.5) of volunteerism and non-profit work in charitable food distribution actually *contributes* to the societal failure to meaningfully respond to poverty, has been widely acknowledged and accepted. The second, perhaps due to its brief appearance on the first page of the Acknowledgements section, seems to have been missed by most.

"Purposely, I interviewed relatively few clients in this research," (Poppendieck, 1998, p.vii) begins the second paragraph; "We have, on the whole, a great deal more information about poor people in such settings than we do about more privileged staff and volunteers, and I believe that we need to know more about the latter in order to understand how our society has made the transition from entitlements to charity that is explored in this book". It is this invitation to take seriously the role of privilege and power in the creation of unequal access to food and other basic human needs that has been largely overlooked in the FI literature.

One recent exception to this is Möller (2019; 2020; 2021), whose field work inside of food banks in the UK decidedly did not include interviewing the program's clients. Quoting Bhattacharya, Möller (2021, p.10) reminds us that often "giving voice to the unvoiced leaves [them] open to being served up as an exotic dish to be consumed or to being viewed as one would view a performing animal in the zoo". Guthman has done similarly, building on Slocum's focus on the subject of alternative food provisioning as those who "bring good food to others" (2008a, p.433). Following from Toni Morrison's project to "avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers" (as quoted in Guthman, 2008a, p.433), Guthman chose to examine her students' field work observations while they worked for alternative food programs rather than "the objects of their enrolment efforts" (Guthman, 2008a, p.443). Examination of the subject, rather than the object, of food programs showed that "those who wish to convert" may more productively "listen, watch, and sometimes even stay away instead…allow[ing] others to define the spaces and projects of food transformation" (Guthman, 2008a, p.444).

Indeed, Möller (2021, p.2) observed how focus on the well-established role of welfare retrenchment often overlooks the active role of charities themselves in "producing new knowledge of crises and negotiating dominant discourses about poverty in their everyday practices". To this

end, food poverty is "problematised and governed by an expanding network of charities, business partners and a growing advice industry" (Möller, 2021, p.3), bolstered by a "constant academic gaze" (Möller, 2021, 5) seeking the real reasons for charities' 'clients'' need. Through disciplinary mechanisms and categorizations, charities and their corporate partners follow market logic in order to increase their reach, "as well as," according to Möller (2021, p.5), "their own benefits", as exemplified in Fisher's (2017) demonstration of the 'Hunger Industrial Complex'. Therefore, austerity policies and charitable responses are better interrogated as "displacement from formal to informal techniques of government and the appearance of new actors on the scene of government" (Lemke as quoted in Möller, 2021, p.7). We see how food poverty is made visible and governable through food charity, in all its forms discussed in the first section, by "creat[ing] new governmental spaces to maximise probabilities" (Möller, 2021, p.30) of its uptake as a natural solution. It is not so much that food access has been left ungoverned, as many proponents of the 'right to food' default toward in their advocacy. Rather, new modes of governing erase the possibility of anything other than "constantly inventing new subgroups deemed to be 'at risk' while developing new diagnostic tools…better behavioural mechanisms, more effective choice architectures and support systems" (Möller, 2021, p.115).

Others have also offered their interpretation of food banks as "institutions of the neoliberal urban governance regime" (Washawsky, 2010, p.766), actively participating in the expansion of the roles of non-governmental stakeholders. Shannon (2014, p.249) argues similarly of 'the food desert' paradigm and its role in "governing obesity" as "an expanded, spatialized form of 'neoliberal paternalism'",…that presents "a set of policies meant to restore social order to dysfunctional communities and 'mismanaged lives'". What these, as well as Möller's and Guthman's, perspective shifts from the "exotic 'Other'" onto the subjects of food provisioning have done is offer an alternative to dominant representations of critical food charity scholarship.

However, they also all have in common the focus on problemitising our conceptions of FI within the same spaces already defined as sites of insecurity, being the food bank, the alternative or 'secondary' market, or the food desert.

What if the site of the charitable act is occurring within the corporation itself, as is the case with Maple Leaf and its Centre? In this case, knowledge production about FI is happening within a structure controlled by the corporation, a site of considerable power but also of on-going political tensions in its own right. This opens up new questions about governance of these spaces, as well as who the subjects are, what they are provisioning for whom, and how they operate. Here, the concepts of philanthrocapitalism and strategic ignorance help to explain how the structures of corporate power operate within charitable realms. In the next section, I connect the two to a multistakeholderism model that is proliferating, but first cover relevant literature on corporate power in the food system.

2.4 Corporate Power, Philanthrocapitalism, and Multistakeholder Governance

2.4.1 Corporate Power in the Food System

The study of corporate and philanthropic actors in the food system, especially as it relates directly to FI, remains understudied. While there are scholars who have made great strides in identifying corporate capture of charitable food networks (Fisher, 2017; Riches, 2018; Spring, 2018; Azadian et al., 2022; Lohnes & Wilson, 2021; Mendly-Zambo, Raphael, & Taman, 2021), the majority of corporate (Clapp, 2021) and philanthropic (Shiva, 2021) power studies has remained elevated to the scale of the global economy of food. As Rioux (2019) points out, political economy historically has been the study of production and trade's interactions with government and law, at the expense of fully examining other areas in the food system where capital circulates. To begin to remedy this gap, enlisting 'Marx as a food theorist' (Foster, 2016, p.1) helps shed light on food as "a core contradiction of contemporary capitalism", while also explaining the motivations

of philanthrocapitalists within the food system. Finally, themes of corporate power and philanthropic capitalism taken together show how multistakeholderism has emerged in food systems to create 'food insecurity governance'.

Corporate power in the food system is growing in what Clapp (2021, p.404) says "can only be described as a profound reconfiguration of the world food economy" as firms across supply chains continue to merge into 'mega-companies'. Moreover, the concern "that powerful firms in concentrated markets are more incentivized to advance the short-term interests of their shareholders rather than the public good" is certainly present in the food system (Clapp, 2021, p.404). The importance of food systems to human life, livelihoods, and Earth's ecosystems means it is imperative that we better understand the consequences of this corporate power (Clapp, 2021, p.404). As such, transnational commodity firms and agrochemical companies have received increased scrutiny over the past decade (Murphy, Burch, & Clapp, 2012; Clapp & Purugganan, 2020; Shiva, 2021), aiding in our understanding of their influence over state-based and intergovernmental mechanisms aimed at regulating their activities, as well as private forms of governance (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009).

This has been characterized by corporate actors increasingly having a role in creating the same rules that are aimed at governing their activities (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009). Paying attention to instrumental, structural, and discursive dimensions of corporate power show how corporate actors lobby for or finance political agendas, predetermine policy-makers' options, enforce privately set rules, and frame issues and problems in public discourse (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009). Moreover, Clapp and Fuchs (2009, p.3) have identified "a complex relationship between the exercise of power and the use of the concept of sustainability in the governance of the global food system". That corporate power plays a significant role in setting the parameters of debates about sustainability in the food

system becomes more salient later in this thesis when considering the 'sustainability' framework that Maple Leaf's interest in food insecurity emerged from.

However, frameworks of corporate power in global governance tend to ignore corporations' philanthropic activities altogether (Cutler, Haufler, & Porter, 1999), interprets its use as "proving [corporations'] as…valuable societal actor[s]" (Fuchs, 2007, p.146), or simply as another mechanism of power (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009). I contend that these conceptualizations are underestimating the power and dynamics exercised in these spaces. Rather, corporate philanthropy should be examined as sites of governance themselves. For instance, Youde (2019, p.39) recently argued that philanthropy and philanthropic organizations need to be taken seriously as relevant and important actors by International Relations (IR) as a discipline, given that they "have the power to shape and alter the global political agenda…distinct from other types of non-state actors". Plainly stated, "they possess their own power domains" (Youde, 2019, p.39).

Recently, the FI literature has moved into a more critical analysis of food corporations in charitable spaces. By 1986, Riches had already implicated foods banks as "agents of the food industry" (p.122), and made several points regarding this relationship. First, that the charitable good of giving away surplus erases questions about the purported efficiency of private markets that create that which would otherwise be 'waste'. Second, that by then a dependency had already been established between food banks and the food industry. Third, that it is cheaper for food corporations to donate food than to absorb the social and financial cost of disposing of it. However, Riches' and others' main focus has long been on the 'failure' of the social welfare state in creating these circumstances, rather than the 'success' of other actors in legitimating a new space for their power to govern. Indeed, Riches' substantial body of work tracking FI's rise with shifts in the structure of the Canadian welfare state reflects an approach that identifies jurisdictions' political economic structures as shaping public policy, while not quite approaching a critical materialist approach that

interrogates the powerful actors that shape political economic structures (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019). Not until 2018 did Riches call out "corporate charity" as a distinct issue in and of itself, moving into a space akin to the 'critical materialist' approach to political economic inquiry. As Dowler (in Riches, 2018, p.xvii) stated in the Foreword to *Food Bank Nations:* "This is a shocking book. Shocking in its contents; shocking in that it is needed now, more than ever; and shocking to me. I have worked on food, poverty, and policy responses for nearly 40 years, yet so much here comes as new or into the sharpest possible focus".

While Riches refers to 'philanthrocapitalism' briefly, his conclusion that 'Big Food' as a main beneficiary of the charitable food system does not encapsulate the full picture. Riches argues that corporate charity functions through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mechanisms and is realized as demonstrating good will, a sound business sense, and competitive branding, referring to this as a form of "corporate social investment" (Riches, 2018, p.109). Fisher's (2017, p.262) examination of the 'Hunger Industrial Complex' pushes past these concepts with a focus on "deep-rooted financial, political, and organizational connections" that have tied food banks to "capitalism's logic of inexorable growth". Further, Fisher (2017) notes that "corporations are central to the growth trajectory of the emergency food system", implicating both in "practices that perpetuate the current inadequate system" (p.262). More than that however, Fisher (2017, p.36) refers to Himmelstein's interpretation of a "private sector alternative to socialism", wherein corporate philanthropy is the small price businesses must pay to keep conditions favourable for capitalism. This comes closer to the notion of a 'social license to operate' (SLO) that Maple Leaf's Centre is born out of, and a change that I argue points to the food industry as viewing philanthropy related to food *insecurity* as central to its own 'future-proof' growth, rather than overtly and solely donating food to food banks as has been the traditional CSR approach. As frameworks of corporate power discussed above have illuminated, corporations seek to govern areas where rules are

established that regulate their operations. In order to fully understand this shift and its implications on the governance of FI, I first turn to the literature on 'philanthrocapitalism' as a reminder that these tactics are not necessarily new.

2.4.2 Philanthrocapitalism and Strategic Ignorance

According to Engels (1892, p.392), in the context of the bourgeoise class, capital "assumes a hypocritical, boundless philanthropy, but only when its own interests require it; as in its Politics and Political Economy". He explained that charity from those with wealth emerged as a way for owners of capital to degrade and keep subservient the proletariat class. Engels remarked how this arrangement was akin to a "bargain with the poor" (1892, p.392) to prevent an upsurge in discontent with the inequality which was unfolding through the accumulation of capital. In fact, Marx contended that poverty is a necessary by-product of capital accumulation because the creation of wealth for a few requires the impoverishment of many through primitive accumulation (Tilzey, 2017). Meanwhile Friedman, who championed the neoliberal model of capitalism, disagreed with the premise of 'corporate philanthropy' (Tilzey, 2017). He argued that corporations had no responsibility to society other than to create jobs and pay taxes. Friedman contended: "Few trends could so thoroughly undermine the very foundations of our free society as the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their shareholders as possible" (as quoted in Tilzey, 2017, p.320).

However, Friedman likely overlooked the potential for philanthropy to increase the opportunities of a corporation to maximize its share value. As Fisher (2017, p.44) notes, again drawing on Himmelstein, "although corporate philanthropy presents itself as non-ideological and apolitical, it presumes a political vision, a tacit understanding about the nature of American society and the role of large corporations within it". As Foster (2016, p.2) shows, Marx himself was preoccupied with food production as "the underlying material conditions of capitalist production,

understood as an alienated metabolism of nature and society". Engels also pointed to "artificial food scarcity and inflated prices" as a contributing factor in poor nutritional intake (Foster, 2016, p.4), and Marx was concerned with questions of "food degradation additives, and toxins", referred to as "adulteration", as "all associated with the transformation of food into a commodity" (Foster, 2016, p.4). Marx, as interpreted by Foster (2016, p.18), contended that "when agriculture became a capitalist enterprise it needed to try to increase output and value added continuously just as in any other sector", and that "capitalism…is the opposite of an ecologically self-sufficient system". Finally, in Marx's own words (quoted in Foster, 2016, p.20), "capitalist production…only develops the techniques and the degree of combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker".

Indeed, according to McGoey (2021, p.393) the origins of philanthrocapitalism lie in an alliance of pro-market economists and scholars who promoted 'seeking profit in unprofitable pursuits', hinging on an underlying principle of 'creating shared value' in the 1980s and 1990s. Promoted by *Harvard Business Review*, the World Economic Forum (WEF), and many others, shared value refers to "seek[ing] opportunity for business in solving social problems" (McGoey, 2021, p.393). The result has been predatory partnerships and "the pernicious influence of centrist or left-leaning philanthropic foundations in entrenching anti-democratic forms of corporate power today" (McGoey, 2021, p.404). McGoey argues that these "claims of a natural harmony of interests can and do distort judicial and public understanding of the importance of a separation of private and public powers" and that "an assault on democratic checks has…transpired" (McGoey, 2021, p.404). At the same time, philanthropy by those who are implicated in societal harms is not a new phenomenon. As McGoey, Thiel, and West (2018) show, when John D. Rockefeller established his foundation, the business practices of Standard Oil was earning him the criticism as being the 'greatest criminal of the age' by US senator La Follette. Similarly, Andrew Carnegie's "violent

union-busting tactics" were widely known by the public, and the paradoxes of his philanthropy were that he seemed to become even more ruthless in pursuing profits in the name of dispersing them later (McGoey, Thiel, & West, 2018).

As the above paragraphs show, capitalists have historically and contemporarily had a preoccupation with philanthropy both as a means to an ends, as in the 'bargain with the poor', and as the ends themselves, as in philanthrocapitalism. It is this philanthrocapitalism, by definition of its proponents as "doing good by doing well" (McGoey, 2021, p.393) that I argue signals philanthropy as a site where corporations seek governing roles. However, as McGoey (2015; 2021) points out, a key conundrum for scholars interested in philanthrocapitalism is the very openness of its alignment between profit and philanthropy that makes it novel, especially as evidence mounts that the 'win-win' model has clearer winners over others. However, here I suggest a second area of interest of McGoey's, namely strategic ignorance, as a bridge to a better understanding of the insidious nature of capitalists' philanthropic endeavours.

McGoey's (2019, p.2) theory of strategic ignorance situates the problem of 'deliberate ignorance', or 'the Ostrich instruction', as first appearing in modern legal settings in the 19th century. The related 'wilful blindness principle' then was used to successfully prosecute Enron executives one hundred years later on the basis that since they had the means to identify criminal activity, they were found to be guilty even if they did not *directly* carry out criminal acts themselves. However, McGoey (2019, p.22) notes, wilful ignorance is difficult to prove, and that feature is what continues to make it a valuable corporate strategy. Large corporations, McGoey argues, exploit strategic ignorance for financial gain. Further, it is favourable political networks and laws that make strategic ignorance more lucrative in certain settings than others, though it has a long heritage in global business practices. A macro-level analysis of this phenomenon by

Chadwick (2019) shows that the same legal regime that constitutes capitalist accumulation[5], enabling financialization and speculation in the food system, negates attempts through human rights law to ameliorate hunger[6]. Instead, international governance has long been preoccupied with "foster[ing] an 'enabling environment' for the achievement of food security", with no attempt to cohesively link the "free-floating variables" that explain the "disabling environment in the first place" (Chadwick, 2019, p.23).

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, but which bears repeating here, McGoey (2019, p.40) notes that "social power (as well as the socially powerful) sets agendas for what is known and what is not known". Much of the power exercised in philanthropic spaces seems to find legitimacy through this 'social power', especially when considering that "the strength of different organizations—social, economic, cultural—is often reliant on *not* articulating the ways that internal practices conflict with public perceptions of the organization's activities" (McGoey, 2019, p.40). As Chadwick (2019, p.23) points out, the modern analysis of global hunger rests on assumptions of "ready-made victims, defined by lack". Further, explains Chadwick, "their poverty, vulnerability, insecurity, and rightlessness—ever more precisely located, profiled, and defined—is calculated as the sum of the possessions, claims, and social entitlements that they do not have" (Chadwick, 2019, p.23). It is "the lot assigned to them under current social, political, and economic structures" that is left unsaid (Chadwick, 2019, p.23), leading to contemporary 'right to food' discourse taking on an "individualistic entitlement-oriented approach", one that "appear[s] largely

[5] See Appel, 2019, for a general analysis of the constitutive effect that law has both on capitalism and inequality, as they are constantly made and remade through one another and the legal instruments that make them licit.

[6] Although beyond the scope of this thesis, it would be interesting to compare the legal regimes that constitute food program networks in Canada lawfully registered as 'charities', alongside those that constitute financial markets and other tools of capital accumulation. For starters, while tracing charity law reform in Canada, Singer (2020) points out that the legal obligations of charities are drawn from both the *Income Tax Act* as well as Canadian common law.

content to achieve concessions from the dominant mode of power to ensure that basic needs are met".

The solution then, as McGoey (2019, p.49) illuminates, is that "the utility of ignorance as a tool of power is that it is a tool of reason. Once this point is accepted,…'ignorance' becomes easier to see". Unveiling the 'ignorance alibis' of philanthrocapitalists in food governance spaces will mean uncovering the ways that food corporations "furnish plausible deniability and make unawareness seem innocent rather than calculated". The difficulty doing so, as McGoey (2019, p.61) states, is that there "are people who argue for the introduction of new, explicitly anti-democratic forms of decision-making that draw on what proponents describe as the superior authority of 'simulated oracles' to determine the best course of economic or political action in any given situation". In the next section we see how these anti-democratic forms of decision-making have been propelled forward by philanthrocapitalists as 'multistakeholderism'.

2.4.3 Mustistakeholderism and the Governance of Food Insecurity

In contrast to an established global governance framework of 'multilateralism', Raymond and Denardi (2015, p.573) define multistakeholderism in global spheres as "two or more classes of actors engaged in a common governance enterprise concerning issues they regard as public in nature". Further, it is "characterized by polyarchic authority relations constituted by procedural rules" (Raymond and Denardi, 2015, p.573), though the rules and practices remain in flux. Depending on the types of actors involved and the nature of authority relations between them, variations of these two dimensions can produce different types of multistakeholderism (Raymond and Denardi, 2015). Raymond and Denardi (2015) purport there are four specific classes of actors involved in multistakeholderism, these being states, formal intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), firms, and civil society actors. However, they also argue that multistakeholder governance itself is far less uniform and consistent.

In the book *The Perils of Partnership*, Marks (2019, p.2) explores how in recent years, "partnerships and so-called multistakeholder initiatives (MSIs)" have emerged as a dominate paradigm for public health interventions. He continues, "a distinctive feature of these arrangements is collaboration with corporate actors that are causing or exacerbating the very problems that public health agencies are trying to solve" (Marks, 2019, p.2). Further, recent endorsements of MSIs by the World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that "this practice will continue anew" (Marks, 2019, p.2), and as the UNFSS has indicated, multistakeholderism in the global governance of food has gained considerable traction (Chandrasekaran et al., 2021; Canfield, Anderson, McMichael, 2021; Nisbett et al., 2021). Indeed, Valente (2021) recently expounded clear links between philanthrocapitalists, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the Rockefeller Foundation, and growth of international multistakeholderism in global food policy governance.

Marks (2019) suggests that MSIs have proliferated in response to criticism of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in recent years, while using similar language of 'partnership' and 'inclusivity' to justify its presence. Indeed, the *ad hoc* Working Group wrote to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food using terms such as "independent multi-stakeholder body", "broad" and "diverse" stakeholder support, and the issue of "a lack of inclusivity in food policy-making" (WGFPG, 2017a). McKeon (2017, p.386) points out that the term 'stakeholder' emerged in the 1960s in the business world, and that in 1971 upon founding WEF, Klaus Schwab developed a concept that showed the corporation at the centre and "a multitude of stakeholders grouped around it". Now corporations are repurposing a word originally used to refer to anyone other than shareholders who might be affected by a corporations' practices (Marks, 2019). Canfield, Anderson, and McMichael (2021) point to the WEF's recent attempts at redesigning multilateral global governance through multistakeholderism in their "Great Reset" model. A quote from WEF's communications show how the organization interprets that a "lack of faith in the 'system' has meant that the notion of

'taking back control'—including from multilateral organizations—has gained currency in recent years" (Canfield, Anderson, & McMichael, 2021). This 'inclusivity' strategically glosses over that it is because they are causing harm to other so-called 'stakeholders' that corporations have attracted, and deserved, renewed regulatory attention.

McKeon (2017, p.380) describes what has occurred as "an abyss" between what originally emerged as 'multi-actor' participation in civil society circles and what has come to be known as 'multstakeholderism', "in which everyone enters the room on the same footing". This practice, McKeon (2017, p.380) argues, "ignores differences in interests, roles, and responsibilities and negat[es] power imbalances". Crucially, multistakeholderism is "becoming a big part of the problem" (McKeon, 2017, p.380). McKeon (2017) traces multistakeholderism to the mid-1990s as emerging alongside PPPs, and notes that in food governance especially it has been "appropriately doctored to counter criticisms of the social and ecological cost of corporate industrial food supply systems" (McKeon, 2017, p.380). The reality of multistakeholderism, argues McKeon (2017), is a tendency to "privilege the framing of the common good in terms of market competition, efficiency, and productivity over alternative civic visions like solidarity and equity" (p.385).

McKeon (2017) suggests strategies to counteract this co-optation by corporate power through the following mechanisms. First, by fighting the "conceptual wooliness" (McKeon, 2017, p.393) of terminology that has allowed corporate infiltration of governance to thrive. Second, to resist corporate capture of human rights frameworks, and third, by "attacking the relatively soft discursive underbelly of corporate power" (McKeon, 2017, p.394) that gains them entry into governance spaces. McGoey (2021, p.403) argues that "the reality and scale of…corporate capture and its negative ramifications are not widely acknowledged, even in the vibrant, growing critical philanthropy literature". In the next chapters I use the example of Maple Leaf and their

philanthropic endeavours to expose the "soft discursive underbelly" (McKeon, 2017, p.394) that has allowed for the corporate capture of FI governance in Canada.

2.5 Conclusion: More Research Needed Where?

It is my hope that through the above, albeit brief, review of the extensive literature on food insecurity, corporate power, and philanthrocapitalism that I have made a compelling case for the need for scholars to move our critical gaze directly onto corporations in FI spaces. Specifically, as Poppendieck (1999), Möller (2021) and Guthman (2008a) have shown, recognition that it is our very urge to provide charity that likely gets in the way of our getting things done need not be discouraging. Instead, noticing where sites of governance are emerging, then being made and remade through discursive mechanisms, is an opportunity to interrogate the motivations behind those mechanisms instead of continuing to contribute to their manufacture of an informal governance that is rapidly becoming formalized. By employing our own power to refuse participation in the making of the marginalized, critical food scholars can be open to exploring the badly needed depths of corporations' strategies to exert even more power over a system where they already enjoy considerable pull.

Further, as Marks (2019) makes clear, it is with a healthy dose of skepticism that academia must approach language of 'inclusive governance' and, as tends to make its rounds in food governance spheres, promises that everyone has a 'seat at the table'. It is only because of the magnitude of scholarship on FI as a 'condition' of poverty that this thesis is able to move beyond the competing discourses that have been popularized, but it may also be because of these silos that change is not occurring at the rate of urgency it should. Leaning on McGoey (2019, p.58) once again, we see how "strategies of ignorance are most powerful when their machinations are least apparent". Therefore, in order to "prove the utility of ignorance, researchers must demonstrate that

strategic ignorance has material concreteness that undermines its own ontological status" (McGoey, 2019, p.58). It is my plan to do so in the coming pages, in the context of Maple Leaf and its Centre for Action on Food Security.

Chapter 3: Maple Leaf Then and Now

3.1 Introduction

*"*Hotdog! Maple Leaf Foods donates record-breaking number of hotdogs in celebration of the May long weekend—more than four million hotdogs provided to food banks across Canada." *— Maple Leaf Foods Inc. (MLF, 2014)*

In order to situate the development of the Centre within Maple Leaf's own work, we must understand the background of the sustainability rhetoric from which it emerged. In this chapter, I walk through Maple Leaf Food Inc.'s corporate history, from its origins in the start of the industrial milling and meatpacking industries in Canada to its current operations. First, I provide a background of the form the company takes today and its "so-called Centres of Excellence" that exemplify its priorities. Then, I trace the mergers and acquisitions leading up to McCain family ownership, followed by insights into Michael McCain as a food business 'leader'. Next, I explore a pivotal change in the company's public-facing and investor-oriented communications following two major events, the first being the Listeriosis outbreak of 2008 that killed 23 people, and the second being a 'hostile' takeover event—turned friendly—by West Face Capital Inc. in 2010. I then connect these to the emergence of a corporate strategy of "controlling your own narrative". Exploring how an emphasis on controlling the narrative culminated into a sustainability blueprint then helps to contextualize the subject of the next chapter, the Action Centre itself.

Throughout this chapter, I bring Maple Leaf Foods Inc. as a corporation into view within the context of the situation of food insecurity, accessibility, and adequacy in Canada described by the Special Rapporteur on the right to food as outlined in the Introduction. I rely on Clapp and Fuchs' (2009) framework of corporate power to show its application to Maple Leaf's operations in policymaking spheres concerning its operations. Specifically, by illuminating the explicit discursive strategy of Maple Leaf's to 'control the narrative' also gives evidence for my argument

that ‘strategic ignorance’ is being employed by the company. As becomes clear in this chapter, the success of the company has largely been due to its active participation, and often leading role, in bringing about the “significant obstacles” to realizing the right to food for all Canadians that De Schutter identified (HRC, 2012). The utility of the following sections is to show how Maple Leaf’s involvement in ‘solutions’, as chronicled in later chapters, is preceded by an era of creating the very problems that it now purports to wanting to solve through its philanthropy. Building an understanding of what led to Maple Leaf’s new-found corporate sustainability narrative is first needed in order to contextualize its desire to seek new spaces to govern.

3.2 “So-Called Centres of Excellence”

Maple Leaf Foods Inc. is a large Canadian food corporation that slaughters and processes millions of animals, amounting to sales in the billions of dollars each year, with operations and markets spanning Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Asia. It is broadly a pork, poultry and other processed foods company, and is traded publicly on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) as ‘MFI’. According to its corporate website, it is Canada’s largest prepared meats and poultry producer, employing 13,500 people with 21 manufacturing facilities (MLF, 2022d). Their sales in 2021 were $4.5 billion, processing approximately 108 million chickens and turkeys making up 33% of its animal supply, and 4 million hogs which accounted for 65.7% of its animal production (MLF, 2022e). The company sources some beef, veal, and other animal products for use in its manufacturing, at 1.3% of its animal supply last year. Maple Leaf describes itself as an integrated company, referring to its ownership of pig production, broiler breeder chicken growing production, hatching egg production, broiler chicken hatcheries and pork and poultry processing plants. Last year, 1.66 million pigs were raised on farms operated by the company, while the remaining pigs were sourced from other Canadian farmers. Maple Leaf holds Canadian hatching egg producers’ quota and plant supply quota (MLF, 2022f), allowing it to both hatch eggs and acquire live chicken

for processing under the national supply management system[7]. Maple Leaf owns 3 broiler chicken hatcheries, from which chicks are distributed to over 500 independent poultry growers contracted by the company to raise its chickens, that are then transferred back to the company's processing facilities (MLF, 2022e). Maple Leaf also owns five feed mills which produces feed for its hogs, sourced from grains grown in North America. Due to their material position within Canadian food production, Maple Leaf has been able to enjoy a considerable level of 'structural power', a less obvious "second face of power" (Clapp and Fuchs, 2009, p.8) that stresses the impact of the input side of political processes. This lends to their ability to "punish and reward" (Clapp and Fuchs, 2009, p.9) provinces, cities, and the federal government for their policies, as we see below and in the next section as they relocate jobs and build new plants through investments in the hundreds of millions.

Maple Leaf is headquartered at a campus-like setting that the company calls 'Meadowvale' outside of Mississauga, Ontario (ON) (MLF, 2022g), and owns manufacturing plants in five Canadian provinces. In Alberta (AB), there is a hatchery, a poultry processing plant, and a pork processing plant that together employ around 1,000 people (MLF, 2022h,i). The 45,000 square foot pork plant in Lethbridge, AB, is described as a small custom facility where pigs are sourced exclusively from contracted Hutterite family farms to supply Japanese markets (MLF, 2022i). There are two plants in Winnipeg, Manitoba (MB). The first is used for processing pork destined for Canadian and US markets, employing 1,795 people, and the other is focused on packaging some of that pork (MLF, 2022b). In Brandon, MB, a 650,000 square foot plant is described by the company as a "super plant", sitting on 320 acres of land and employing 2,200 people (MLF, 2022k). This plant was also specifically designed for the Japanese market, as well as domestic and

[7]Canadian poultry is federally regulated through a national quota system, though each province has its own marketing boards through which each jurisdiction's quota is governed.

other international locations, situating Maple Leaf as a beneficiary of the export-oriented economy that has been "detrimental" to many of Canada's other agricultural producers (HRC, 2012, p.8). Maple Leaf currently runs 18 facilities in Ontario, two of which are scheduled to shut down in 2022 (MLF, 2022l). The majority of its poultry processing is concentrated in the province, with only two hatcheries and three smaller chicken processing plants that will remain open upon transition of some of their production to a new "world-class" plant in London, ON (MLF, 2022m). In Hamilton, ON the company built a 500,000 square foot plant in 2012 on 48 acres of land, where it produces deli meat products (MLF, 2022c). The corporation owns three manufacturing plants in Quebec (QC), as well as a "mid-sized, boutique" sausage facility in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (SK). In the United States, Maple Leaf wholly-owns Greenleaf Foods, SPC[8] headquartered in Elmhurst, Illinois (IL) outside of Chicago. It has operations in Seattle, Washington (WA), Turners Falls, Massachusetts (MA), and in Indianapolis, Indiana (IN). The company processes tempeh and other plant-based products, sold under the brand names Lightlife® and Field Roast Grain Meat Co. Maple Leaf also has a "full service" sales representatives office in Tokyo, Japan (MLFJ, 2022).

Maple Leaf produces prepared meats, ready-to-cook and ready-to-serve packaged meals, snack kits, fresh pork and poultry, and plant protein products. Its products are sold primarily to retail grocery outlets and chains, discount stores and wholesale buying groups, as well as

[8] SPC is an acronym for "Social Purpose Corporation" as it is known in Washington State, and Greenleaf Foods, SPC, is described as an "independent subsidiary" of Maple Leaf Foods Inc. Its 2021 Annual Report (Greenleaf Foods, SPC, 2021) states that "per the requirements of the State of Washington, as a Social Purpose Corporation, we operate in a manner intended to promote positive short-…and long-term effects and to minimize adverse short-… or long-term effects of the corporation's activities…". The short and longterm social purpose objectives of the company include "to be a social enterprise that provides wealth and good health to all of this Corporation's stakeholders" and "to create a new form of capitalism that rewards the hard work, financial resources, and generous talent of individuals, and acknowledges the complex and diverse community of stakeholders that creates all enterprise". Finally, the company intends "to remain independent". Of note, in a "next-step in a long-term leadership succession plan", long-time Maple Leaf Foods executive Adam Grogan was appointed President of Greenleaf on January 6, 2022. He is described as a "key contributor within the Maple Leaf Foods organization for over twenty years" (Maple Leaf, 2022s).

foodservice restaurants and distributors, and institutional buyers such as hospitals. It also supplies product for "many" major food retail and foodservice companies' private label brands (Faveri, 2021), including Loblaw, Sobeys, and Costco[9]. Housed on the property of its Canadian headquarters in Ontario, Maple Leaf's "*Think*FOOD! Centre" is a 25,000 square foot "innovation and ideation" facility, focused on research catering to the foodservice sector. Its product lines include bacon, ham, wieners, delicatessen meats, cooked chicken products, sausages and sliced meats, as well as lard and canned meats. It also sells fresh pork cuts, whole fresh chicken and other cuts, as well as turkey. In its plant-based division, it produces plant-based 'faux' meat products such as burgers, loaves, and roasts, as well as plant-based cheeses and hotdogs. In addition to grocery retailers, its plant-based products have their own foodservice lines and are sold by many national and multinational fast-food outlets (see Suen, 2022, for some examples). In addition to Maple Leaf® branded lines such as Prime®, Natural Selections®, and Big Stick!, following acquisitions of other large brands it now also sells its products under the names Schneiders®, Holiday®, Deli Express®, Coppola, Sunrise®, and Larsen to name a few (MLF, 2022o). The

[9] Specific retailers are not readily disclosed by Maple Leaf, but can be inferred from several public LinkedIn profiles of past and current employees, as well as job advertisements. For example, Christine Hunter has worked at the company for 19 years, currently in the role of "Customer Insights Manager - Loblaw", and previously as "Manager, Customer Business Development - Costco". A recent job ad on Maple Leaf's website for this exact position lists "Account responsibility includes Private Label for all categories, Cooler, Grocery and Snacking" (MLF, 2022v). An ad for the same position but for their Walmart account lists "Frozen Pastry, Further Processed Poultry, Canned and Grocery" under their private label categories (MLF, 2022w). From December 2014 to October 2019, Hunter was the "Manager, Private Label Development" of "Customer Branded products for Loblaw", a role that now appears to be held by Meli (Melliza) Ilhamto. An individual with the profile "McFarlane M" lists their current role since November 2010 as "Sobeys National Private Label Team Lead at Maple Leaf Consumer Foods". A post by Halal Expo Canada regarding their 2022 Conference introduced Onder Ozturk as "Director, Business Development at Maple Leaf Foods", describing his "diverse portfolio" there as including the development of "private label businesses with Canada's largest retailer" [in 2021, research by Yeates, Hernandez, and Nhieu showed Whittington Inv-George Weston Ltd., parent company of Loblaw Company Ltd., as the largest retailer in Canada]. In the description of a role he held in 2012, Curtis Frank's LinkedIn profile (Frank, 2022) states that the branded and private label business with Loblaw Companies Ltd. "exceeds half a billion dollars in sales across more than 15 categories and 30 brands".

majority of its revenues are represented by sales in Canada, though it has buyers in over 30 countries. The reach of their products in Canada alone is significant, and also difficult to decipher due to its extensive private label and foodservice customer base. Tracing everywhere that Maple Leaf products are served or sold is beyond the scope of this thesis, however it should be clear at this juncture that their structural power in the Canadian food industry is substantial. Clapp and Fuchs (2009) note that this allows corporations to "have control of pivotal networks and resources" (p.9). This becomes important in the next chapters when considering how strategies to maintain this power over the years is now being applied to its charitable work.

As alluded to in the quote that opens this chapter, Maple Leaf's 'bread and butter' is hotdogs. Without making qualifications on the nutritional quality or value of a hotdog, or its socioeconomic relations, I will simply reiterate here that it was a concern of De Schutter's that Canadian policymakers "increase the availability and accessibility of nutritious foods" (HRC, 2012, p.14). A decade later, Maple Leaf's Senior Vice President (VP) of Marketing and Innovation, Casey Richardson, was quoted in Meat and Poultry magazine saying "throughout our history, bacon has been a signature product for us. Today, bacon is one of our top two product categories, rivalled only by hot dogs" (Shire, 2022). The company's financial reporting is organized into only two categories, the "Meat Protein Group" and "Plant Protein Group" (MLF, 2022x), and therefore the amount of revenue earned by these two top performing products is not publicly available. However, as is clear through Richardson's words, Maple Leaf is not secretive about their importance to the company's bottom line, having newly constructed a "Bacon Centre of Excellence" in 2021 (MLF, 2022b) through an expansion of one of its Winnipeg plants, aimed at

additional production capacity of its eight bacon products. In 2017, Rory McAlpine described capital investments of over a billion dollars into the transition into these new facilities[10].

McAlpine (2017) explained, "we've closed a number of plants in Canada, but we poured capital investment technology into so-called Centres of Excellence where we're trying to achieve the scale and efficiencies that make us competitive". The second, a "state-of-the-art" 'Heritage' plant (MLF, 2022c), described by the company as the most technologically advanced of current operating plants, is where their flagship hot dog brand Top Dogs[11] is made, along with 33 other types of hot dogs across ten different brands. Note that the 'capital investments of over a billion dollars', as well as the discursive strategy of enlisting sustainability rhetoric of "scale and efficiencies", is used by McAlpine to justify, and quickly deflect from, the closures of numerous plants over the years into 'technologically advanced' hotdog plants. As Clapp and Fuchs (2009) argue, the "contested nature of the concept of sustainability has enabled it to be used strategically by different actors". Here we see how closing meat-packing plants, often the backbone of communities for decades, is smoothed over by this in a manner of strategic ignorance, as well as the highly contestable nature of the sustainability of a hotdog. Using terms like "state-of-the-art" and building mega-plants while shutting down older, smaller plants is not new for Maple Leaf. In 1998, it announced construction of a new, $112 million plant in Brandon, MB that at the time McCain described "as the biggest and best, fastest and most efficient pork plant in the world" (Tjaden, 1998) and according to Canadian Business magazine would "set a trend for the rest of the

[10] Maple Leaf's website describes a single plant included in this project as representing "the largest investment ever made in food manufacturing in Canada" (MLF, 2022c).
[11] Jacquie McNish for the Globe and Mail reported in 2012 that McCain, along with Board Member at the time Greg Boland, hosted their interview "in a Toronto meeting room bearing the name "TOP DOGS"" (McNish, 2012).

industry" (Berman, 1998). At the time of the announcement, as I discuss in detail below, McCain was threatening workers at three other plants with wage concessions or plant closures.

When declaring "National Bacon Month" (MLF, 2021d) in December of 2021, Maple Leaf released a 'bacon fact sheet' of sorts, citing 1.8 million packages of bacon is being produced per week at the plant on Lagimodiere Boulevard in Winnipeg. The infographic stated that "one year's production of bacon strips laid end to end, would go around the world SIX times!". These examples of 'excellence', for Maple Leaf, equate to efficiently producing a technologically advanced hotdog, and enough strips of bacon to consume Earth in a single year. In the next section, we see how discursive strategies to aggressively assert dominance in the industry has long been utilized by Maple Leaf. As the next sections make clear, Maple Leaf has always relied upon "efficiency", "world-class", and other rhetoric in order to smooth over the less-than-savoury aspects of intensified animal slaughtering and processing that it profits from.

3.3 Milling, Meatpacking, and Michael McCain

On its corporate operations side, the last three decades for Maple Leaf have been characterized by an aggressive pursuit of mergers and acquisitions, a forceful restructuring of labour conditions in the meat-packing industry, and a constant strive for 'efficiencies' in order to justify both. 'Stakeholder' logic emerged at a time when externalities of industrial production were coming to the fore of public and policy concern (Marks, 2019; McKeon, 2017). However, I illustrate here that rather than 'externalities', negative effects on employment, high concentration of power, and increased environmental degradation are all features of the Canadian meat and food processing industry that Maple Leaf's success has been cultivated through. As I show below, Maple Leaf is the outcome of mergers and acquisitions that has led to a highly consolidated industry, giving it the structural power to set agendas and create standards in policymaking spheres (Clapp and Fuchs, 2009) in the Canadian food industry. However, this structural power alone appears to

have not been enough to wield authority in food *insecurity* governance, as evidenced later by its moves into 'multistakeholderism'. Instead, it relies upon a strategic ignorance of how their profits are made, and for this reason, it is imperative to bring these realities to light in order to uncloak the "deliberate anti-visibility" that shrouds philanthrocapitalists' past (and present) actions and motivations.

Maple Leaf Foods Inc. was formed as the result of a merger between Maple Leaf Mills Limited and Canada Packers Inc. in 1991. In 1987, Hillsdown Holdings, PLC, a British agroindustrial conglomerate now operating as Premier Foods (owners of the OXO® brand, among other packaged food products) purchased Maple Leaf Mills, Canada's largest flour producer at the time (D&B Hoovers, 2022). Hillsdown Holdings had been "hoping to build a diversified food empire", and in 1990 purchased Canada Packers, Canada's largest meat and food processing company at the time. The merging of the milling and meatpacking giants made it into a "large, diversified company, with a substantial presence in the meat, bakery and agribusiness industries" (Berman, 1998). It also had a "slew of recognizable brand names", including Tenderflake shortening and Dempster's bread. Importantly, as one of the largest in Canada, it was "big enough to survive the wave of consolidation that was claiming many of Canada's food companies" (Berman, 1998). However, Hillsdown was "more of a passive investor than an operator" and as such "was more concerned with cutting costs and trimming departments" (Berman, 1998). By 1995, despite cuts, sales, and upgrades, Maple Leaf remained largely a commodity producer and was struggling (D&B Hoovers, 2022).

In 1995, G. Wallace F. McCain (hereafter referred to as "Wallace McCain"), through his company McCain Capital Corporation (MCC), and the Ontario Teacher's Pension Plan Board (OTPPB) made a successful $1.2 billion takeover bid for Maple Leaf Foods Inc. (Canadian Press, 1995). In an interview with MacClean's, McCain said of the $150 million from OTPPB that

matched his own personal investment, “I raised the money so easily that it scared me” (Willis, 1995). The Toronto Dominion Bank (TD) put up the majority of the funds at $570 million (Farnsworth, 1995), but the leveraged buy-out of the entirety of Maple Leaf’s shares was a testament to the growth-oriented decision-making of Canadian pension funds at the time. Aimed at earning higher returns than on previous investments in order to secure the retirement incomes of an aging baby boom generation, this also came with an increased desire for power over their investments (Willis, 1995). On April 24, OTPPB took a joint-controlling interest of the company through 41.1% of the total issued and outstanding shares, with MCC holding the next majority share of 34.2% (Maple Leaf Foods, 1996). During a time marked by an eroding social safety net, the future income of Ontario’s more than 200,000 teachers became “closely tied to sales of Maple Leaf luncheon meats and hot dogs” (Willis, 1995). According to the Canadian Press (1995), the year was punctuated by “record profits” for corporations in Canada, while “not much of the money trickled down to ordinary Canadians” with wages growing only marginally and high rates of unemployment continuing.

The McCain ownership era began a new phase of strategic transactions. At the time, Maple Leaf was reporting its financial results in three segments: “Meat Products Group”, “Bakery Products Group”, and “Agribusiness Group” (MLF, 1996). Meat products referred to its meat and meat-related protein businesses, including fresh and canned, as well as its rendering business, Rothsay. Its bakery business had operations in Canada and had just expanded into the United States. Agribusiness operations included animal feed and pet food, international commodity trading, and seafood processing. In its 1996 annual report, Archibald McLean, Vice-Chairman and CEO, and Michael McCain, then the President and COO (Chief Operating Officer), stated in a joint interview that the acquisition of Burns Foods in the past year “adds to the potential of our meat operations and creates Maple Leaf Meats as a truly national meat company” (MLF, 1996, p.7). It also “better

positioned" the company "to serve the rapidly growing Asian markets". At the same time, Maple Leaf began divesting from its milling operations, Belize Mills Limited, Barbados Mills Limited, and Maple Leaf Mill's Inc.'s assets, now considered to be "non-core".

In an industry talk given last year, Maple Leaf's current COO Curtis Frank described the years between 1995 and 2009 as an era of several market challenges that ushered in a seven year period that he refers to as "the fixing stage" (AWB, 2021). With respect to this post-2009 fixing stage, Frank stated that "it was a tough time, it was a challenging time financially in the business because the fixing stage is really difficult, and seven years is a long time" (AWB, 2021). I return to this seven years below, but first must discuss what exactly happened during the initial years of McCain-family ownership that led to needing subsequent fixing. While those market challenges are not explicitly contextualized by Frank, "pig-ugly labour dispute[s]" (Sheremata, 1997) rife with demands of wage concessions while "the company pitted one city against another, and one province against another, in a demeaning competition for low-wage jobs" (Goyette, 1998) characterized these early days. As Wallace wrote in his 1996 Chairman's message, that the company's sales, earnings, return on net assets, and share price all improved dramatically since his taking over was the result of "a broad base of performance-minded managers, relentlessly in pursuit of creating shareholder value" (MLF, 1996, p.3). Michael, Wallace's son, was focused on meat products out of the gate, and is said to personally have "brought the union…to its knees" and "set in motion changes that have transformed the entire Canadian pork industry" (Tillson, 2000). Indeed, by 1998 through "operational efficiency initiatives", the company had closed the 81-year-old Gainers plant in Edmonton that it had acquired from Burns to the tune of 850 lost jobs. It had also strong-armed its employees in three cities into wage rollbacks up to 40 per cent, coupled with hundreds of lay-offs and imposed part-time hours.

Proclaiming that "the day of the regional Canadian meatpacking plant has come and gone," McCain justified these actions as an industry imperative (Fennell, 1997). "We have to consolidate the industry to generate scale and plant utilization equal to the US," he stated (Fennell, 1997). In 2014, the motivations behind this approach became clearer in a speech about leading the company through change given to the Association of Fundraising Professionals' Toronto area chapter when McCain said "…it was absolutely necessary to the survival of the business" (McCain, 2014). Indeed, Michael was attempting to "improve on the slim margins, and occasional losses, that have beleaguered Maple Leaf over the past decade" (Berman, 1998). However, on the heels of NAFTA, by 1996 almost twenty percent of the hogs raised in Canada were being sold to processors in the US who paid higher prices for the live animals (Berman, 1998). This presented a barrier to the McCains' visions of the "tremendous growth potential" of the Canadian pork industry, and thus Maple Leaf took out full-page newspaper advertisements warning that, unless this trend is reversed, Canada's $5.8-billion hog processing industry could be gutted (Berman, 1998).

Internally, the company took a "tough, intransigent Maple Leaf approach" that was "undoubtedly the work of Michael" (Berman, 1998). By December of 1997, a total of 2,300 Maple Leaf employees were on strike across the country, including in Edmonton, AB, Hamilton and Burlington, ON, and in North Battleford, SK (MacDonald, 1997). At the same time, the company announced that they would build a "sprawling", "world-class" slaughterhouse in Brandon, MB. McCain said of the plant, "we've staked our future on what will become…the world's best pork processing facility" (MacDonald, 1997). Aiming to be "one of the biggest hog producers in Canada and one of the most efficient in the world" (Mahood, 1997), McCain was reportedly taking a "three-pronged approach": first, to become a bigger player through acquisitions; second, to build larger processing plants; and third, to cut labor rates (Berman, 1998). The idea was to lower the cost of processing pork, which would allow Maple Leaf to pay more for live hogs. With higher prices, the

logic was that more hogs would stay in Canada instead of being exported to the US, which would allow Maple Leaf to process more and to "justify larger, more efficient processing plants which can drive costs down even further" (Berman, 1998).

Maple Leaf was "clearly the most aggressive of the industry players" (Mahood, 1997) in Canada at the time, determined to expand their operations and take advantage of newly opening Asian markets. And while I do not have room here to give what is a badly needed full analysis of the company's treatment of workers over the years, the following should give a good indication of how Maple Leaf workers were "forced to subsidize Michael McCain's ambition to expand his new company" (Kip Connolly as quoted in Foot, 1997). In Burlington, Maple Leaf asked workers to agree to have their wages cut from an average of $16.50 per hour to roughly $10 (Berman, 1998), accept new job classifications including part-time positions and differentiations based on skill, as well as changes to their benefits (Canadian Press, 1997b). In March of 1998 after a four month strike, workers voted to accept a contract that slashed their wages up to 40 per cent after Maple Leaf threatened to close the plant (MacDonald & McCarten, 1998). The new wage rates "utterly defeated" workers, with the union estimating the cuts meant the average workers' income would plummet from about $35,000 per year to $20,000 or less (MacDonald & McCarten, 1998).

In Edmonton, some workers earned $22 per hour plus benefits and bonuses (Canadian Press, 1997a), for an average of $14 per hour across the plant (Berman, 1998). When they refused to take an offered 28 cent raise (Sheremata, 1997), Michael said in an interview "we're deadly serious—we will not have a repeat of the Gainers 1986 situation[12]. If…a strike occurs, Maple Leaf

[12] There is much more to say about the labour history of this particular plant, site of the infamous Gainers Strike a decade prior. See Samoil, 2013, for a detailed historical account of the strike that preceded Maple Leaf ownership of the plant, but that includes details of a bathroom tax (Headlam, 1994) on its workers that Maple Leaf grandfathered into its policies after purchasing the plant from Burns, then used as a "bargaining chip" (Sheremata, 1997) in collective bargaining discussions before shutting down the plant for good.

will be compelled to close the plant in Edmonton" (Canadian Press, 1997a). The workers called the McCains' bluff and went on strike in November of 1998, so Maple Leaf shut down its operations and "hauled away its machinery, obliterating 850 jobs in the process" (Berman, 1998). Shortly after, locked-out employees in Hamilton, ON and North Battleford, SK voted to take similar deals. These wage cuts reverberated throughout the industry, with other processors in the years that followed citing the need to compete with Maple Leaf when forcing their own workers to take concessions (Canadian Press, 1999).

McCain would later state that "probably the second hardest thing that I've ever had to do in my career is ask people to adjust their compensation across the country" (McCain, 2014), signaling his awareness of the scope and magnitude of what he had been instrumental in bringing about. However, his next sentences are more telling regarding the reason why he did so, stating that "it was very, very difficult involving very significant, and in some cases, hardened responses. But it was absolutely necessary to the survival of the business" (McCain, 2014). The survival of the business has always been Maple Leaf's, and McCain's, priority. That such a significant event in the Canadian food industry is never mentioned in communications regarding its sustainability and its relationship to FI however, begins to show the strategy behind this display of ignorance as Maple Leaf claims its role in food insecurity governance.

3.4 A Series of Cascading Obstacles

We now enter the era directly preceding what Curtis Frank refers to as "the fixing stage" with the year 2008, the year a deadly Listeriosis outbreak in Canada originated in a Maple Leaf plant in Ontario. Not only does it seem to have served as one of several catalyzing factors pointing to the need to "fix" the company, it also appears to be when an emphasis on "controlling the narrative" originated, later taking hold through a formalized blueprint. Much has been written already on the outbreak that resulted in serious illness for 57 people and resulted in the death of 23

individuals (Government of Canada, 2009), therefore details of the outbreak itself will not be extensive in this thesis. However, I do focus on Michael McCain's handling of the event, before touching on a second internal but 'existence-threatening crisis' when West Face Capital Inc. attempted to take over company ownership in 2010. As McCain himself characterized the period according to Pullen (2013), I identify this "series of cascading obstacles" as setting the foundation for the sustainability blueprint described in the final section. I show how a focus on gaining back control over their reputation and the public narrative led to claims about and significant investment in Maple Leaf's food safety regulatory leadership. We begin to see how claims to being "world-class", "global leaders", and "first" to do the right thing has been an on-going discursive strategy of McCain's, culminating in a blueprint list of "how we will create shared value" that begins with "leveraging our leadership in sustainability" (MLF, 2021a). This demonstrates a discursive strategy of power, where "legitimacy is intimately wrapped up in discourse itself" (Clapp and Fuchs, 2009, p.10) as well as their instrumental power to set the agenda that is later seen in the advent of the Centre.

First, a look into Maple Leaf's food safety behaviour before the crisis helps to contextualize McCain's discourse later. Stemming from what Hatt and Hatt (2012) call "the neoliberalization of food safety", increased industry power over Canadian food safety through a decreased oversight role of the federal government created dangerous conditions for eaters that preceded the Listeriosis outbreak in 2008. For example, in May of 2003, a veterinarian who worked for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) was suspended from a Maple Leaf Foods pork processing plant in Nova Scotia (NS) after complaints by the plant's manager that he had been rejecting too many hogs (Waldie, 2006). Dr. Scott Frazee was the head veterinarian at the Berwick, NS plant, then Larsen Packers Limited, since 1997. The plant had been acquired by Maple Leaf in February of 2000, but operations continued under the previous owners (MLF, 2000). Dr. Frazee's responsibility at the

plant included evaluating pigs before and after slaughter to detect abnormalities caused by diseases or injuries that could affect the safety of their meat for human consumption (Frazee v. CFIA, 2006). The initial complaint from plant operator, Mike Larsen, to Frazee's regional Inspection Manager was that his "excessive condemnation rate" of hogs was resulting in "great financial loss" to the producer (Waldie, 2006). The producer, in turn, was threatening to send their hogs to another facility, thus threatening the plant's productivity.

In a letter sent by the bargaining agent for CFIA veterinarians to the regional manager, Vice-President of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, Maureen Harper, stated that "this is becoming an all too frequent occurrence in this Agency" (Frazee v. CFIA, 2006). Harper continued, "Plant management makes a complaint to CFIA if they perceive a vet is too stringent in performing his duties which causes an economic loss to the plant and CFIA pulls the vet from the job to keep the industry happy". Later, the Public Service Alliance would point to the need for Maple Leaf to "shoulder some responsibility in lobbying for a system of increased self-regulation" (Pitts, 2008) that a public investigation connected to the listeriosis outbreak[13]. Indeed, two months and three subsequent independent assessments later, no wrong-doing was found on behalf of Dr. Frazee. Tests of Frazee's diagnostics that validated 95% of his reports, and an on-site evaluation by a federal Program Specialist revealed no discrepancies between rejection rates by the same producer at Larsen's with that of its hogs at a second plant. However, when the CFIA Regional Director in Nova Scotia notified him that he would remain in his position as Veterinarian-in-Charge at Larsen Packers, he also gave instructions that Frazee take action to establish more trust with plant management. Outlining four steps Frazee should take during his workday to better portray

[13] Addressing the Greater Toronto Chapter of the Association for Fundraising Professionals in 2014, McCain gave a talk on the theme of "Leading Through Change" wherein he joked broadly about the challenges Maple Leaf has had in recent decades that "some people might say we invite this stuff" (AFPToronto, 2014).

his reasoning to plant staff, he was required by his employer "to ensure the results of your work are well understood by all".

Crucially, in a later investigation of the CFIA's handling of the situation, an adjudicator for the Canada Public Service Labour Relations Board found that repeated requests from the New Brunswick Pork Marketing Board and Mike Larsen to the CFIA to have Frazee removed from the plant's kill floor were "in the nature of 'harassment and coercion'" (Frazee v. CFIA, 2006). Notably, in a response to one of these complaints, the CFIA's Atlantic Operations Executive Director referred to "national standards" of condemnation rates within which they ensured Frazee's diagnoses fell. Frazee stated in his testimony to the Board that "normal" or standard rates did not, and should not, exist since the rejection of hogs fluctuates depending on their health condition. He reminded his employer that it is up to the veterinarians and inspectors to observe and discover any problems that render the meat unfit for human consumption. Although a representative from Maple Leaf was quoted as saying "the vets play a very important and valuable role at these facilities", industry pressure on vets working in meat production at the time was high (Waldie, 2006).

Although this NS plant was not the source of the deadly outbreak that emerged in Ontario in 2008, this situation situates a Maple Leaf-owned facility and its managerial interactions with food safety regulatory bodies within the "harmonization of competing standards with political, economic, and ecological forces" preceding the listeria crisis (Hatt & Hatt, 2012, p.21). Relatedly, in 2005 the CFIA ended the role of its federal inspectors in environmental monitoring for listeria on food contact surfaces, justified by the need to match the US Department of Agriculture in order to ensure export of Canadian products was maintained (Government of Canada, 2009). As became clear post-outbreak, a new inspection routine that gave more oversight to plant staff to complete their own audits and have inspectors check their paperwork, rather than complete physical inspections, led to a communication gap (Government of Canada, 2009). Further, Maple Leaf's

ramp up in production of a new low-sodium product, coupled with a plant that had long been having recurring food safety deficiencies that went unregulated, directly led to the outbreak (Hatt & Hatt, 2012).

Most relevant is that it was a corporate environment of "belt tightening" iterated by Michael McCain through one of his regular weekly emails to thousands of Maple Leaf staff that loomed in the foreground of the crisis (Cribb, 2008). Following poor financial results in the first two quarters of 2008, the priority within Maple Leaf was cost cutting and a hiring freeze. According to a series of emails that McCain later said in an interview were meant to be private (Cribb, 2008), 'Project Braveheart' was communicated to staff through strategies like "scrubbing our budgets" at the same time that corners were being cut at plants leaving meat cutting machines unclean, and therefore unsafe (Government of Canada, 2009). As news broke that the Listeriosis outbreak was connected to the Maple Leaf Toronto plant, McCain's emails revealed the "disturbing" way that he believed the deaths involved were being classified by Health Canada, as "these are elderly patients with multiple health challenges" (Cribb, 2008). "Because these individuals had multiple health challenges," McCain later stated in an interview, "they were vulnerable to all of those health challenges" (Cribb, 2008). Indeed, a major portion of Maple Leaf sales is in what they call the "Healthcare and Hospitality" sector, with a branch of the business "designed specifically to meet [the] unique needs" of "senior living home[s] and hospital[s]" (MLHH, 2022).

Michael called the media attention that ensued "extensive" (Cribb, 2008). To his staff he wrote "…a reporter can drive a person to say unwanted, or inappropriate things. A news reporter is more interested in a headline, than the accuracy of the story" (Cribb, 2008). Although he credited Maple Leaf's successful recovery from the crisis to communicating with the public, including through news outlets over the course of the outbreak, privately he was concerned about journalists who were "crawling all over the authorities" regarding industry oversight in Canadian food safety

(Cribb, 2008). Of note, to his own employees he stated "thousands of jobs in Canada depend on…customers having confidence in us. Even if we did have dirty laundry (which we don't) it sure wouldn't be wise to air that debate for their viewing pleasure" (Cribb, 2008). When polling its employees several years later, the company found over 92% of staff thought it was important that Maple Leaf should be doing more in food safety and quality (McAlpine, 2017). "After what occurred to our business in 2008," Rory McAlpine explained to a group of agronomists in 2017, "that legacy…is deeply ingrained in how we think about our responsibility as a company".

McCain would later sum up the aftermath of the Listeriosis crisis as a "fight for survival" (McNish, 2012). In its communications following the outbreak, Maple Leaf would repeat that their food safety program "is the most vigilant in Canada" (MLF, 2008). It immediately announced a "program of continuous improvement in food safety" (Pitts, 2008) that included a Food Safety Advisory Council, "a team of independent experts" with a mandate to "support our commitment to becoming a global food safety leader" (MLF, 2009). It also created a new executive position of Chief Food Safety Officer and appointed the president of the American Meat Institute Foundation, Randy Huffman, to the role (Pitts, 2008). Huffman, who also worked for Koch Industries' Agriculture division, is now Chief Food Safety and *Sustainability* Officer [emphasis added] at Maple Leaf (MLF, 2022q). Key to this renewed food safety strategy was the company's "vow to work with government and other companies to enhance food safety across the entire industry" (Pitts, 2008). It began hosting an annual "Food Safety Symposium", now in its twelfth year, that "strives to create a collaborative atmosphere that engages people along the food supply chain…in building a safer global food supply" (MLF, 2021b).

For Maple Leaf, it was "its internal processes", namely in "bacteria trapped in slicing machines" (Pitts, 2008) that caused this crisis yet its attempts at crisis management looked to make changes across the sector. Journalist Gordon Pitts (2008) made the shrewd observation that "the

entire deli meat segment [of Maple Leaf's business] is under scrutiny now, and any recovery of [public] confidence has to be industry-wide". Recall that UN Special Rapporteur, Olivier De Schutter, identified that a significant barrier to smaller-scale, regionalized meat processing in Canada is the "highly capital-intensive measures [that] have been adopted in compliance with food safety requirements" (HFC, 2012, p.9). Maple Leaf's activities around food safety reflect a corporate strategy of controlling the narrative, as I cover in more detail below.

Next, in what would turn into a "six year saga to shake up Maple Leaf Foods Inc." (Kiladze, 2016), 'activist investor'[14] hedge fund West Face Capital, led by owner Greg Boland, "put Maple Leaf in its crosshairs" in August of 2010, acquiring a 10 per cent stake in the company (McNish, 2012). In the following weeks, Maple Leaf "became the object of withering private and public critiques" that came to a head when West Face launched a proxy contest months later in December (McNish, 2012). The details of this event are summed well elsewhere (see Emerson, 2012, for a detailed legal account), and go beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the lengthy and public battle called into question the legitimacy of a Board of Directors stacked with McCain family friends and allies, as well as Michael's ability to lead the company. The fight ended the already strained relationship with Ontario Teacher's, with the pension fund selling their remaining stake in the company. McCain made nice with Boland, taking his advice to tone down their recent restructuring plans, and adding a balance of independent directors to its board including Boland himself. The "fixing stage" of Maple Leaf's reputation had commenced.

[14] "Activist Investor" is a term used in the financial industry to describe aggressive investors that identify and purchase ailing companies by leveraging their weaknesses in order to turn them around, then sell them at a deep profit.

3.5 A Blueprint for Controlling Your Own Narrative

Indeed, Maple Leaf's reaction to the crisis also gives insight into how their sustainability strategy began developing in subsequent years. In an interview with Report on Business Magazine just months after the outbreak, McCain "refused to even call what he had done 'crisis management'", and a direct quote from Michael states "this is not about some contrived strategy" (Pitts, 2008). Referring to the now infamous video of McCain apologizing that the company released for a national television spot within 24 hours of being named in the outbreak, the communications consultant who worked with the company at the time, Linda Smith, agreed. "We weren't that smart, believe me," Smith told Report on Business (Pitts, 2008). Yet in her bio for Smithcom[15], the firm she founded just two years later in 2010 "to service clients facing reputational damage or special situations" (Smithcom, 2022a), she boasts about being "part of the Maple Leaf Foods crisis communications team that handled the Listeriosis outbreak in 2008 and subsequent recovery". Maple Leaf is also featured as one of Smithcom's "finest collaborations", with an endorsement provided by Senior VP, Lynda Kuhn stating "Maple Leaf Foods has had a strong relationship with Linda Smith for more than 15 years…Smithcom is a vital extension of our team" (Smithcom, 2022b).

In a recent blog post about crisis management plans, Smith writes "remember, you want to control your own narrative" (Smithcom, 2022c). In the outbreak of Listeriosis, Maple Leaf quickly claimed "industry-leading" and "world-class" food safety strategies when its reality suggested the opposite (MLF, 2022r). Curiously, as a global reckoning with the deleterious ecological impacts

[15] Smithcom's website homepage describes the company as "an experienced communications firm dedicated to reputation management for clients experiencing intense times of business scrutiny or opportunity. Through integrated corporate affairs and communications campaigns, sound issues management and strategic crisis communications, we help our clients find their voices, establish and maintain their competitive edges, and enhance their reputations". The first of three ways they list they do this is "Crisis and Issue Management".

of industrial meat production continues toward a fever pitch, Maple Leaf has crowned itself a "carbon neutral food company" with a vision to become "the most sustainable protein company on Earth" (Guthman et al., 2022). Given that these claims emerged based on the same conceptual pillars of sustainability that the company's interest in FI has, testing them against the corporation's practices can help to contextualize the strategy overall.

In its 2021 Sustainability Report[16], Maple Leaf disclosed a timeline of developing its sustainability initiatives. In 2013, the company appointed Lynda Kuhn, a long-time executive of Maple Leaf, to "create a company-wide sustainability program" (MLF, 2021a). Then in 2014, Maple Leaf purportedly "embraced the message "you manage what you measure"" (MLF, 2021a), and adopted "ambitious goals…in key sustainability areas". In 2015, the company hired Tim Faveri under the title VP of Sustainability and Shared Value with the mandate to "oversee its efforts to become a more efficient and environmentally-friendly operator" (MLF, 2021). Finally, in 2016, its team engaged in "months of rigorous leadership training and ideation workshops" in order to identify a "renewed purpose and commence its transformational journey to make a meaningful difference" (MLF, 2021a). Curtis Frank referred to this as "two additional years defining the company's path and long-term growth strategy, when Maple Leaf Foods started to focus on its purpose – to 'raise the good in food'" (AWB, 2021).

According to a case study prepared by the United Way's 'Social Purpose Institute', during this time "outside consultants were hired to help develop the social purpose" and Maple Leaf's leadership was "educated on the power of Purpose to align everyone and prepare them to develop a core purpose for the company" in early 2016 (UWBC, 2021). The outside consultant that appears to be connected to the blueprint is Ian Chamandy, whose LinkedIn profile states that he has been

[16] Separate from its financial reports as required by Canadian Securities legislation, Maple Leaf publishes a voluntary, self-regulated report on its sustainability initiatives annually.

the owner of “Blueprint Business Architecture” since January of 2005 (Chamandy, 2022a), based on Harvard Business Review saying that “purpose should drive your business planning”. Chamandy recently wrote a post that stated “for 20 years I’ve successfully deployed my proprietary Blueprinting process with companies such as Scotiabank, Kruger, Toronto Stock Exchange, Maple Leaf Foods, CN Tower and others” (Chamandy, 2022b). The result, the post states, “is a transformation… especially in sales” (Chamandy, 2022b). He continues “sales of existing products or services come faster and easier, new sources of revenue are revealed that you never expected… if you lack clarity around Purpose, you are sabotaging your sales”. Indeed, the methodology explained on the Blueprint Business Architecture website describes your Purpose as a “strategic filter that guides everything you do and say as an organization”, resulting in a transformed understanding of the business’s “full value to all material stakeholders” (BBA, 2022).

Listed under the six benefits of your Purpose, are “new revenue: discover new markets to penetrate and revenue generating ideas that you never imagined before” and “more sales, faster and easier" by arming your teams with “what the customer is buying, not what you are selling” (BBA, 2022). According to Frank, the outcome of this process for his company was identifying “sustainability and solving food insecurity” as “the drivers behind Maple Leaf Foods ’mission” (AFB, 2021). The question remains however, how exactly could solving food insecurity lead to more sales for Maple Leaf? And, what new markets could Maple Leaf penetrate by, as its own sustainability blueprint reads, “rais[ing] the good in food”? According to Tim Faveri (2021), “our blueprint is consistently delivering top and bottom-line growth”. Six business priorities are listed on the blueprint under the heading “How we will create shared value”, which Faveri states are all “very strategic” (Faveri, 2021). In the next section, I look closer into what this ‘shared value’ means for Maple Leaf. As a feature of the corporate concept of philanthrocapitalism that emerged in the 1990s, that it just began to take hold for Maple Leaf in the past decade signals changes in Canadian

food movements that, not unlike the internal crises described above, threatened its viability as a corporation.

3.6 Conclusion

Maple Leaf Foods Inc.'s history as a corporation since the McCain era of ownership has been one full of threats to its existence as a company, requiring negotiations with labour, regulatory bodies, financiers, and the public to maintain its reputation. In the context of the Special Rapporteur's report in 2012, Maple Leaf has not only been actively involved in the areas identified as barriers to food security in Canada, but has often led the charge in bringing about these detrimental changes. Having had a sweeping effect on lowering the wages for an entire sector of its industry, as well as taking on a 'food safety leadership role' has not been without its consequences with respect to issues related to food insecurity or local food systems. Further, the high level of concentration in the industry that Maple Leaf aggressively promoted has in turn helped it to garner additional power to further its agenda in food insecurity spaces. While not explicitly stated, the striving for "shared value" that emerged at the end of Maple Leaf's fixing stage points to its identification of crises that were yet to come. Next, I examine Maple Leaf's own knowledge of the "threats to its viability" (McAlpine, 2017) from the 'food security sector' itself.

Chapter 4: Shared Value and the Centre for Action

4.1 Introduction: The Shared Value of Food Insecurity

"On the food security, I wanted to mention this. In the fall we announced the launch of what is kind of a non-profit NGO *in* a company. It's the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security. We're committing one percent of pre-tax profit, plus another million and a half in annual product donations. For granting monies, for supporting really becoming the consciousness of Canada on this issue of food security." — Rory McAlpine, 2017, from the *Alberta Institute of Agrologists 13th Annual Conference on Agriculture, Food and the Environment*

The meaning of Maple Leaf's concept of "shared value", as expressed through the sustainability blueprint explored in the previous chapter, becomes clearer in this chapter. So, too, do the implications on food insecurity governance of a corporation like Maple Leaf establishing itself within what now appears to be the very centre of a 'food security sector' that has emerged in Canada. While the 'independent' members of the Centre's board seemingly represent civil society organizations, academia, and philanthropic actors, it is governed mainly by Maple Leaf itself. As becomes clearer in the next chapter, even those Board Members "at arm's length" of the company are entangled with Maple Leaf elsewhere, as initially described in the Introduction. In order to understand how this came about, I first describe the board in full in this chapter, identifying the expertise of the Centre's governance. What emerges is an exemplar of multistakeholderism and its tendency to reinforce the power of its most powerful actors, as well as the way that philanthrocapitalism has begun to set the food policy agenda in Canada.

First, I dive deeper into the behind-the-scenes industry strategy based in the concept of a 'social license to operate'. Then, I describe the conceptualization of the Centre at the time it was launched, analyzing how this idea of social license relates to how Maple Leaf begins to communicate about food insecurity. Then, I discuss the ways that treating food insecurity as a business opportunity have real implications for the politics of what we imagine to be possible for the future of the food system and its eaters. Moreover, I show that the "shared value" in food

insecurity for Maple Leaf and its shareholders is as a new space of governance where it feels "entitled to participate as a decision-maker" (Marks, 2019, p.135). Marks (2019) notes that this fundamental aspect of multistakeholderism happens in spaces where corporations have identified that they may be potentially adversely affected by the policies being made. They infiltrate governance arenas in order to "frame problems and solutions in ways that are least threatening to industry" (Marks, 2019, p.135). The question remains, then, not of what Maple Leaf and its executives have to gain by governing food insecurity, but what it has to lose if they do not.

4.2 A Social License to Operate

After coming through two public crises that exposed weak links in Maple Leaf's internal practices, the company had faced increased scrutiny of its licenses to operate under formal regulatory structures that govern food safety and corporate governance. However, in this chapter I show how Maple Leaf was concerned about its "social license to operate" as well, and applied learnings from those crises in order to more proactively control the narrative in this realm. Moreover, it also seems to be where the idea of shared value began to take hold during Maple Leaf's sustainability journey, before becoming entrenched in its blueprint. As the chapter's opening quote makes clear, the motivation behind launching the Centre was rooted in the goal to "become the consciousness of Canada" on the issue of food security (McAlpine, 2017). This quote came from a presentation entitled "Maple Leaf Foods and Social License" given by Maple Leaf's Senior VP of Government and Industry Relations at the time, Rory McAlpine. In this section, I show how Maple Leaf conceptualizes social license in terms of public trust, and how that connects to who it has chosen for its Centre's board.

An ambiguous practice that originated in the late 1990s, the term social license is attributed to a mining manager who identified that, in order to manage political risk in a new age, maintaining

positive relationships in the communities that companies operated in was equal in importance to acquiring formal, regulatory licenses (Mather & Fanning, 2019a)[17]. Mayes (2015) describes 'social license to operate' (SLO) as a corporate concept that has gained traction in global extractive industries as a strategic management response to increasing criticism of the sector's well-established track record as socially and environmentally damaging. From a report on 'Mining, minerals and sustainable development' prepared by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Mayes (2015, p.109) found that the industry group directly linked the idea of SLO "not only to the success of the industry but also to its very survival". This followed recognition of the fundamental distrust the industry had garnered where it operated. Recalling De Schutter's report on the state of affairs in Canadian food policy, the food industry nationally and globally was facing similar distrust. This was discussed during the brainstorming process that took place while Maple Leaf was conceptualizing its 'social purpose', as depicted in a diagram showing 'mega trends shaping the food industry' that included "big foods, big brands under attack" (UWBC, 2021).

The issue of trust proved pivotal in Maple Leaf's idea of 'social license'. In his presentation, McAlpine shared a slide titled "The Public Trust Model" and attributed the model to the paper "Consumer trust in the US Food System: An examination of recreancy theorem" (Sapp et al., 2009)[18]. Led by a sociologist at Iowa State University, the authors explain recreancy theorem (as proposed by Freudenburg in 1993) as a theory that public trust depends on people's perceptions of

[17] This thesis did not begin from a framework of social license, and as such a complete scan of the literature in terms of 'social license' in food industries has not been completed. However, a preliminary scan suggests that connections are being made between the concept of SLO, multistakeholderism, and corporate power in global food governance (Mialon et al., 2021), and a research agenda for social license in aquaculture has been developed (Mather & Fanning, 2019b).

[18] This paper was not properly cited on McAlpine's slide, but enough information was given, including the publishing journal and the year, in order to decipher which paper was being discussed.

institutional actors' competence and ability to behave responsibly (Sapp et al., 2009, p.527). Through several boxes and arrows, the model demonstrated a pathway to an element labelled 'social license', defined on the slide as "privilege of operating with minimal formalized restrictions based on maintaining public trust". According to the model, a combination of 'competence (expertise)' and 'confidence (values)' contributed to 'trust', "one of several factors driving social license". The word confidence was circled in red, with the caption "much stronger influence on trust". McAlpine explained, "if the end goal is social license…," the public trust model says "you also need to demonstrate that you engender confidence in what you do and how you do it. That speaks to the values of your organization, those are the key ingredients to trust. And then with trust, you build social license. It's not the only thing that social license depends on but it's probably the most important, and this is kind of how Maple Leaf fully thinks about it". McAlpine demonstrates here that having "shared values" is what the company has identified as a key ingredient to building the trust needed to maintain a license to continue conducting business.

The research, co-authored by four marketing consultants and two representatives from the US Centre for Food Integrity (CFI), was also "supported" by CFI, an agrifood industry organization. McAlpine described the Canadian CFI as "this new body nationally that is helping the Canadian agriculture and food industry address these issues of social license through research, consumer education, and through building up principles for action in all the areas of concern to Canadians today" (McAlpine, 2017, 8:54-9:11). He references a survey they undertook in a slide titled "marketplace and societal shifts: What are Canadians very concerned about?". The rising cost of food was rated highest, "the number one concern of all the big concerns in 2016" according to McAlpine (2007, 9:24-9:29). Citing the CFI survey, McAlpine stated that "the market is reacting to concerns, certainly this affordability issue is driving the way people shop and so on… So that's just a bit of a fact base on which we started to build this sustainability strategy" (McAlpine, 2007,

10:20-10:23). McAlpine went on to cite CFI research on whether or not the public believes the Canadian food system is headed in the right direction, wherein 50% of respondents selected "unsure". "If we don't address that uncertainty gap," expressed McAlpine, "then you know we have a problem as an industry going forward. We have a political problem as much as a consumer problem".

McAlpine then launches into the four pillars of the sustainability strategy that Maple Leaf developed, aimed at "building a powerful growth platform in sustainable meat". "If, fundamentally, people don't believe you share their values then they stop listening to your expertise," he explained, citing empathy and understanding as imperative to stopping people from tuning out your message. Following descriptions of other sustainability initiatives, McAlpine goes on to describe the Centre itself as "part of that, you know, process of building trust" in the context of food insecurity in Canada. On a slide titled "some learnings along the way", he talks about learning in spades during the Listeriosis crisis "the importance of never taking public trust for granted". "Because we're so much more connected to consumers, all that it really takes is somebody with a keyboard to… badly damage your reputation". The above suggests a sense that the corporation was applying learnings from its dealings with the media in 2008 to the potential for crises to develop in the future. Further, that the industry at large had lost trust in recent years enough to threaten the business's viability.

4.3 The Centre of a "Food Security Sector"

On December 6, 2016, Maple Leaf announced the launch of the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security. Described as a "long-time commitment to advance sustainable food security" (MLF, 2016), the Centre was initially described as a "not-for-profit organization" with three focus areas being "advocacy, innovation and learning" (MLF, 2016). According to the press release that day, the Centre, as well as Maple Leaf, would "support, engage and advocate for important policies that advance sustainable food security" (MLF, 2016). $10 million over the next

five years, and a fund endowed by Michael McCain with $2.5 million of “personal” resources, would be used to “invest in innovative food security initiatives based on dignity, empowerment and skill building that can potentially be scaled to increase their impact” (MLF, 2016). Referring to a “food security sector”, the Centre would “share learning” from its own work, as well as that of its support networks, that “builds further understanding of the issues, approaches and enables knowledge transfer” (MLF, 2016). McCain, who named himself “Honourary Chairman” of the Centre, provided a quote saying "in a country of such wealth and abundance, it is a national shame that one out of every six children and four million people in Canada face food insecurity” (MLF, 2016). He also shares that the Centre is the “culmination of several years of stakeholder engagement to understand this complex issue” as well as deciding where Maple Leaf should direct their resources, being “people, products and financial”, to “make the greatest difference” (MLF, 2016).

In terms of ‘product’, Maple Leaf would also be making donations exceeding $1.5 million annually in the name of this new initiative. Purportedly bringing “deep expertise...in national and global food security, policy, program development and the food sector” (MLF, 2016), the board would be comprised of four Maple Leaf Foods executives, two professors at Canadian universities, and a program director at another Canadian charitable foundation. Interestingly, the premise of the need for creation of such a Centre seems to have been justified by a single “national survey”[19] which apparently showed that over 60% of Canadians didn't understand the “meaning of 'food insecurity’”, and that “less than 1 in 5 Canadians" were "aware of the extent of the issue” (MLF, 2016). Meanwhile, Maple Leaf explained that, from their perspective "food insecurity is a

[19] A citation for the survey at the end of the press release gave the following additional information: “AskingCanadians online survey, EN and FR, n=1,500 Canadian adults 18-69 years (excluding territories); Nov 25-30, 2016.”

pervasive and pressing national issue" (MLF, 2016). Additionally, they said, "income level is by far the strongest predictor of food security", reiterating its role as "the single greatest factor" (MLF, 2016). Even though the reasons "are complex", states the release, the majority of people experiencing food insecurity in Canada "are concentrated in the lowest income groups and are the most vulnerable in our society" (MLF, 2016). Included in a description of "critical advances" that would apparently help their goal to "reduce food insecurity in Canada by 50% by 2030" were the federal government committing to developing a national food strategy, "innovation", and community-based solutions, all of which required "heightened urgency and recognition of poverty, nutrition, culture, community and individual empowerment" (MLF, 2016). Oddly enough, although income is believed by the Centre as being the single greatest contributing factor, it did not make the short list of possible solutions to the problem to which it apparently is directly related. At the same time, under the Canadian Revenue Agency's (CRA) charitable registration information, the Centre's 'charity type' is listed as 'relief of poverty', with the categorical listing as 'organizations relieving poverty'.

As discussed in Chapter 2, heightened urgency and recognition of poverty has been a long-standing feature of the literature on food insecurity. So, too, has the very uncomplicated fact that the majority of Canadians who report experiencing food insecurity are part of the workforce (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Borrowing from Raphael et al. (2018), and more recently Azadian et al. (2022)'s method of searching a charitable entity's website for keywords to analyze their advocacy, a search for the terms "wage" or "wages" on the Feed Opportunity website gives a harrowing 0 results. I will discuss more of the Centre's work further in the next chapter, but here it is important to question why Maple Leaf would like to call attention to the issue of poverty and income, without addressing these aspects of the literature specifically. As McAlpine's presentation above explained, the end goal of creating its sustainability initiatives, including the Centre, was for

Maple Leaf to maintain the public's trust in a changing market. Crucially, here we see how the Action Centre aimed to bring awareness not just to the issues at hand, but to *the corporation's ability to solve them.* McCain's characterization of the reasons that individuals are food insecure as "complex" is a signal that he is strategically exploiting what their survey told them about Canadians' lack of awareness, while smoothing over the very simple fact that the issue is rooted in income.

In the context of the recommendations from the UN's Special Rapporteur on the right to food, specifics around living wage remain outside of Maple Leaf's advocacy. Yet, as a corporation, Maple Leaf is advocating for "changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and to immigration programming… to support immediate labour shortages" that are "chronic and critical", and a "major constraint" on its sector's growth and competitiveness (MLF, 2021c). Nor does it implicate itself in growth of concentration, vertical integration, and buyer consolidation in the agrifood sector despite its operations, as discussed in the previous chapter, hinging on these very "economies of scale" (Mahood, 1997). Further, it does not seem concerned with roles that these scaled operations and the corporations' own involvement in food safety regulations in Canada to match them have had on ensuring the days of the regionalized abattoirs, at least, were over[20]. The value of food insecurity for Maple Leaf appears to be the opportunity to open up a new market for its reputation, while ensuring the discourse is steered away from problems that would threaten the value it pumped out for its shareholders.

Instead, the Centre's Chair, Lynda Kuhn, emphasized that the creation of the charitable arm exemplified Maple Leaf's "very deep commitment to tackling food insecurity" in a blog post

[20] This continues to be an issue for new small-scale abattoir development in Canada, with a recent example in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) pointing to a mismatch in federal regulations with provincial investments in local food security (VOCM, 2022).

entitled "*Power of Empathy*" (MLF, 2021e). "Empathy," Kuhn wrote, "leads to action". This echos the formula of "Empathy, Action, and Description" created by Maple Leaf's communications advisor, Linda Smith, as discussed in the previous chapter. This hints at the Centre's creation as part of putting into action a crisis management plan for the future, one wherein Maple Leaf is already controlling the narrative around food insecurity. Just like that, Maple Leaf crowned itself the centre of Canada's "Food Security Sector", keen to share in the abundance of knowledge, resources, and importantly opportunity, that it had identified within it. Conveniently, it had laid the groundwork for support of the Centre through the multistakeholder initiatives it had facilitated that are covered in the next chapter. Meanwhile, its promise of donating financial and other resources meant that it would ensure criticism from this 'sector' would be kept at bay.

4.4 Deep Expertise in the Business of Food

In this section, I examine the backgrounds of the Board of Directors of the Centre, specifically interpreting where their 'expertise' lies within the landscape of FI. Bolstered by an 'independent' handful of scholars, two Senior VPs, as well as the CEO and COO of the company[21], make Maple Leaf executives the majority of the board. I argue that this is one of the ways that Maple Leaf conflates food industry expertise with food insecurity in order to maintain its position solution-seeking spheres. Further, as is demonstrated in the below biographies, Centre's board is

[21] Until 2023 when Michael McCain will step down as CEO, and the current COO, Curtis Frank, will become CEO.

Table 4.1

Board Members and their Expertise

Name	Date of appointment to board**	At arms length with other directors?	Employment title at time of appointment	Area of expertise
Michael McCain, Honorary Chairman	Dec 6, 2016-Present	No	President & CEO, (now CEO & Chairman) Maple Leaf Foods	Maximizing profitability in the manufacturing of processed meats
Curtis Frank	Dec 6, 2016-Present	No	SVP, Retail Sales (now President & COO), Maple Leaf Foods	Retail sales and business management of processed meat, crisis management
Lynda Kuhn, Chair	Dec 6, 2016-Present	No	SVP, Sustainability & Public Affairs (now SVP & Chair, MLCAFS) Maple Leaf Foods	Public relations in the processed meats sector
Evan Fraser, Vice-Chair	Dec 6, 2016-Present	Yes	Professor; Director, Arrell Food Institute, University of Guelph	Food security under economic globalization
Rory McAlpine	Dec 6, 2016-June 9, 2021	No	SVP, Government & Industry Relations (now retired), Maple Leaf Foods	Government relations in the processed meats sector
Nadia Theodore	June 9, 2021-Present	No*	SVP, Global Government & Industry Relations, Maple Leaf Foods	Government relations, international trade development
Mustafa Koç	Dec 6, 2016-Sept 28, 2020	Yes	Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University)	Food security, food studies, and food policy
Joseph LeBlanc	Sept 28, 2020-Present	Yes	Associate Dean, Equity and Inclusion, Northern Ontario School of Medicine	Indigenous food systems
Beth Hunter	Dec 6, 2016-Present	Yes	(Formerly) Program Director, J.W. McConnell Foundation	Directing philanthropic funds
Chris Fletcher	Sept 25, 2018-President	Yes	Managing Director and Partner, Boston Consulting Group	Business management, shareholder value

*2021 CRA filing with this designation not yet available to confirm.
**Current members highlighted.

stacked with individuals preoccupied with the competitiveness and profitability of the Canadian food industry, either by way of their employment directly with Maple Leaf, their expertise in business management, or their academic research area. As Table 4.1 shows, the expertise of the board, both past and present, is heavily weighted in the processed meats sector or specifically, the management of Maple Leaf's business as described in the previous chapter.

4.3.1 Lynda Kuhn

At the time of the Centre's launch, Lynda Kuhn was Senior VP, Sustainability and Public Affairs at Maple Leaf Foods. Her position is now "Senior VP & Chair, Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security", remaining in a leadership position with the company while her work is primarily that which falls within the Centre's scope. That her position as head of "Sustainability" as a whole was replaced by Tim Faveri in 2015, and an entire executive position is now dedicated to the Centre, speaks to its importance to Maple Leaf's business operations. Kuhn joined the company in 2002 as VP of Investor and Public Relations. It was not until 2013 that she took on the sustainability portfolio, through which Kuhn led "a comprehensive strategy to embed sustainability into Maple Leaf's culture and business practices". She is one of only three women on the Maple Leaf executive leadership team, a group of 17 individuals.

Prior to joining the company, Kuhn completed a Master of Arts degree in Economic Anthropology at McGill University in 1981. Her thesis titled "Economic Development Strategies and the Micmac [sic] of Nova Scotia" (Kuhn Boudreau, 1981) examined the "chronic welfare dependency on Micmac reserves" (Kuhn Boudreau, 1981, p.1) and the provincial governments ' role in "creating and perpetuating the current situation of almost total Micmac dependency on government aid in its various forms" (Kuhn Boudreau, 1981, p.1). Throughout the thesis, Kuhn is critical of the Department of Indian Affairs (IA) for being short-sighted in its tendency to measure investment success through job creation that bolstered statistics and "produces immediate quantifiable results" (Kuhn Boudreau, 1981, p.3). Lamenting the remedial nature of the majority of IA programs such as child care and social assistance, Kuhn wrote: "Less emphasis must be paid on paying Micmac people for activities which should normally be voluntary and family-based in lieu of economic development…This practice only serves to reduce the level of community caring

and cooperation and instills a mentality that one must be paid to do anything for anyone, including oneself! (Kuhn Boudreau, 1981, p.90)".

According to her profile on the Maple Leaf Foods website, Kuhn has led development strategies at regional and community levels, including with [I]ndigenous leaders in Atlantic Canada to advance education, housing, health, and econonic initiatives. She also co-founded Nyota, an orphanage in Kenya, as well as later helping to establish the Wezesha Education Foundation which focuses on work there. Kuhn describes the initiatives as "Nyota, and its offshoot, Wezesha, are grassroots organizations focused on developing self-thinking community leaders, through providing high potential, disadvantaged children with the opportunity to go to school and pursue their dreams" (Kyota Home Kenya, 2013c). From a January 2013 blog post by Kuhn detailing the "very Kenyan" feel of Nyota amidst the "chaotic" environment of roughly 50 children living together, she wrote "I felt so privileged just to be able to experience their culture with them — something only a vacation at Nyota will provide!" (Kyota Home Kenya, 2013a). In another post, she describes one of the childrens 'grandfather, who had been a tea farmer all his life earning only $110 annually (Kyota Home Kenya, 2013b), and notes that "Kenya has a history of political corruption, stemming back to British colonialism. The result is millions of people living in extreme poverty" (Kyota Home Kenya, 2013c).

Reminiscent of the academic gaze present in food insecurity scholarship described in Chapter 2, Kuhn's own work does not reflect self-recognition of her own positionality in these spaces as one of extreme comparative privilege. Incorporating Gorman's (2019, p.5) analogy of being "kinder and less just", while Kuhn exhibits an understanding of the structural and political injustices she encounters, the discourse she uses to discuss the objects of her philanthropy blurs, and thus reinforces, those structures. Further, the Wezesha Education Foundation seems to have been absorbed into Speroway, a Canadian charity that "procures and distributes millions of pounds

of food, hygiene items, and other supplies" in Canada and Africa (Speroway, 2022a). While Wezesha appears to still be" provid[ing] scholarships and mentoring to academically gifted, destitute young people" (Speroway, 2022b), Maple Leaf is listed first as a donor in Speroway's "Gift in Kind Program". Described as offering their "corporate partners the seamless movement of food and other essential supplies in an efficient and cost effective manner" (Speroway, 2022c), this is precisely the type of charitable endeavour that Guthman (2008a, p.442) refers to as a "supply side emphasis" that is "inadequate and possibly misguided".

4.3.2 Michael McCain and Curtis Frank

Since the exit of the Ontario Teacher's Pension Plan (OTTP) as a partner, Michael McCain is Maple Leaf's largest shareholder (MLF, 2019). For as long as the Canadian Centre of Policy Alternatives (CCPA) has been tracking CEO compensation in Canada, McCain has been on the list of the top 100, with the exception of 2012 when he was not paid through company share plans on top of his base salary of $1,093,723. Excluding this anomalous year, his salary averaged $6,757,558 annually since 2007 (CCPA, 2022). In fact, McCain is one of the wealthiest individuals in Canada, though not due to his CEO income alone. In 1997, by way of a marriage contract and other estate planning documents drafted by his father Wallace, Michael took control of the family holding company, McCain Capital Inc., which in turn controlled the family's interests in Maple Leaf and McCain Foods (Pullen, 2013). Michael became beneficiary of the Wallace McCain Family Trust, the Margaret Norrie McCain Family Trust and the GWF Holding Trust. Through these combined avenues in the late 1990s, his net worth "ballooned" (Pullen, 2013). Two years later, in 1999, he

became CEO of Maple Leaf Foods. According to Forbes, McCain's net worth is $1.1 billion as at April 4, 2022, placing him at number 2,448 in the world for highest net worth[22].

According to Curtis Frank's LinkedIn profile, he is a "results-oriented executive" and a "critical thinker that balances the need for analytics, intuition, [and] effective relationship building to influence change in high growth, crisis, and turnaround situations" (Frank, 2022). He joined Maple Leaf in 2000 as a management trainee (Willis, 2022) in Regina, Saskatchewan, and became the President and Chief Operating Officer (COO) in 2018. Announced in May, he will replace McCain as the CEO of the company by the spring of 2023 through a "phased leadership transition" (MLF, 2022u). According to a quote provided by McCain at the time, Frank is a "living embodiment" of the corporation's values, and is "exactly the leader [Maple Leaf] need[s] to further [its] vision" (MLF, 2022u). Between September of 2010 and January of 2012, Frank was "directly accountable" for the management of a "turnaround situation[23] of the company's largest customer", Loblaw Companies Ltd (Frank, 2022). His profile reads that the was responsible for the "development of a strategic growth plan" and for "leading a formalized joint business planning process" with the retailer (Frank, 2022). A few years later as the Senior Vice President, Retail Sales, he led an expansion of the company's "fresh and prepared meats growth strategy" in Canada and the US (MLF, 2022u).

4.3.3 Rory McAlpine and Nadia Theodore

On June 9, 2021, Nadia Theodore joined the board of directors of the Centre after joining Maple Leaf less than one year prior as the Senior VP, Global Government and Industry Relations.

[22] To contextualize his wealth nationally, on December 27, 2012, a spousal support release between McCain and his wife during their marriage separation process was the highest ever ordered in Canadian history at the time, at $175,000 monthly (Lepine, 2013).
[23] At the time, Loblaw was focused on overhauling operations after an attempt to compete with Walmart Canada by expanding into superstores and non-food products failed (Strauss, 2010).

Theodore replaced Rory McAlpine in both roles after his retirement. Similarly to McApline, Theodore had an extensive government career prior to working at Maple Leaf. For 22 years, she worked for the federal government in various capacities, beginning with three and a half years at the CRA as a Charities Officer within the Charities Directorate. Next, she became a Senior Policy Analyst with Public Safety Canada in the Aboriginal Policy Directorate, then moved on a year later to Global Affairs Canada first as a Trade Policy Officer, moving up in seniority over the years until her appointment at Deputy Director, Multilateral Trade Policy Division. In July of 2010 she joined the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) where she served as a lead negotiator with the Permanent Mission of Canada to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations (UN). She then worked as a Deputy Chief Negotiator in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Division, DFATD, returning to Global Affairs in 2015 where she handled the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, then served as Chief of Staff in the Office of the Deputy Minister of International Trade. Directly before Maple Leaf, she worked as the Consul General of Canada to the Southeast US, stationed in Atlanta, Georgia (GA).

In an article published on Ron Fanfair's news website in November of 2020, Theodore told the journalist that she "was surprised when Maple Leaf Foods Inc. reached out" (Fanfair, 2020) to offer her a job as her time as Consul General was winding down. At the time, the "company was quite new" to her, and she admitted she had "never been employed in the agro space before" (Fanfair, 2020). She notes that upon researching the company, she felt they were "very much in line" with her business and personal values (Fanfair, 2020). "I believe in economic success that's driven by social value", Theodore said (Fanfair, 2020). When announcing her hiring as of October 13, 2020, McCain stated that "Nadia's deep experience in global issues, her understanding of government and her diplomatic skills will be [sic] tremendous value to Maple Leaf Foods" (MLF, 2020c). By February of 2021, five months later, Theodore was addressing the House of Commons

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food as a representative of the company (MLF, 2021c).

When he retired in 2020, McAlpine had worked for Maple Leaf for 15 years and served on the Centre's board since its founding in 2016. Lynda Kuhn is quoted saying "we benefitted greatly from Rory's expertise in government and industry relations" in the Centre's press release announcing Theodore's appointment. Indeed, McAlpine joined the federal government as a Trade Commissioner with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in 1982. Prior to joining Maple Leaf, McApline was the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Fisheries for the province of British Columbia (BC). He also served as Director General of the International Trade Policy Directorate of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, as well as the Executive Director of the Farm Products Council of Canada (FPCC), Director of the Grains and Oilseeds Division, and Deputy Director of Multilateral Trade. He is now a board member of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI), an "open think network for the agrifood sector" (CAPI, 2022). McAlpine is also on the Strategic Advisory Board of the University of Guelph's Food From Thought research program, the recipient of a $76.6 million grant from the Canada First Research Excellence Fund, a federal research fund focused on "research areas that create long-term economic advantages for Canada" (Food from Thought, 2022).

4.3.4 Evan Fraser

Evan Fraser is a professor in the Department of Geography, Environment & Geomatics at the University of Guelph. He is the Director of the Arrell Food Institute (AFI), a research initiative at the University of Guelph (UG) with a vision of "a future where people in all communities have secure access to safe and healthful food through transparent, competitive, and sustainable food systems" (AFI, 2021, p.2). The institute was a philanthropic endeavour of the Arrell family through their namesake foundation, that the family describes as being "built on the same principles that

have long guided the Arrell family: to be kind and compassionate to those who are less fortunate, and to try to make the world we live in a better place"[24] (AFI, 2022b). The Foundation's mission is "to improve human and planetary health through food" (AFF, 2022b). Nadia Theodore is currently an 'awards adjudicator' for the Institute, a group of "internationally recognized leaders from across the food system to adjudicate the Arrell Global Food Innovation Awards". She has also spoken at an AFI 'food summit' in 2021 as a representative of Maple Leaf Foods on the topic of how government and industry can better work together to shape public policy. A 2020 AFI project entitled "Growing Stronger", a partnership that emerged from the pandemic between AFI and CAPI, lists a 'trusted advisor network' that includes Rory McAlpine and Lynda Kuhn.

Fraser is also the Scientific Director of the Food From Thought research program where he, Rory McAlpine, and others oversee a mission to "increase the sustainability and productivity of global food production" by "sustainably intensifying production" (Food from Thought, 2022). Maple Leaf is one of many private sector partners of the program, and the McConnell Foundation is the lone philanthropic organization involved. Several Canadian and other countries' post-secondary institutions are involved, as are multiple federal agencies and departments including the CFIA. According to Fraser's UG biography, the intent is to "explore how to use big data to reduce agriculture's environmental footprint". Fraser also served on the advisory committee of "The Road to $25 Billion", a project by Protein Industries Canada (PIC) an "industry-led" organization funded through Canada's 'Global Innovation Clusters' program, formerly known as the Innovation Superclusters Initiative. In addition to the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security, Fraser

[24] The Arrell family's wealth comes from Tony Arrell's wealth investment firm, Burgundy Asset Management Ltd., which he co-founded and is now the Chairman of. On the firm's website, the homepage reads "At Burgundy, we understand the responsibility of wealth. We've been building long-term relationships and wealth that spans generations since 1991" (BAM, 2022a). Burgundy has also "partnered with foundations, endowments and not-for-profits since 1994", stating their understanding that these entities are "stewards of capital that must be managed, sustained and grown" (BAM, 2022b).

has been a member of the board of the Weston Seeding Food Innovation Fund, a George Weston Limited and Loblaw Companies Limited research fund that in 2020 was funding projects that "focus on the intensification of the production of food in ways that are sustainable: environmentally, economically and culturally".

Fraser's research centres around a premise of "how to feed nine billion", the idea that a growing world population is straining the capacity of the food system. As Canada Research Chair in Global Food Security between 2010 and 2020, Fraser sees "the global food security challenge" as a century-defining, "grand" challenge of being able to develop strategies to "sustainably, equitably, *profitably* [emphasis added] and nutritiously feed the world's growing population" (Fraser, 2020, p.1). He believes that the solution to these "enormous" issues is through "novel technologies" that can "radically reshape the nature of food and farming systems for the better" (Fraser, 2020, p.3). According to his "Our Experts" profile on the AFI website, Fraser believes "that it is only by building bridges between the corporate sector, government, civil society, and academics that we will be able to create the food systems fit for the challenges of the 21st century". His profiles also boast co-authorship of "over 100 academic papers and book chapters" and that Fraser is "one of Canada's most cited social scientists working on food and sustainability".

4.3.5 Mustafa Koç and Joseph LeBlanc

Mustafa Koç was one of the original directors of the Action Centre, and was replaced by Joseph LeBlanc September 28, 2020. A professor at in the Department of Sociology at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) (formerly Ryerson University, RU), Koç's areas of expertise are the sociology of agriculture and food, social change and development, and globalization (TMU, 2022). In 1995, Koç founded the Centre for Studies in Food Security at RU together with Jennifer Welsh. He served as the founding President of the Canadian Association for Food Studies (CAFS) in 2005, as well as the Interim (Founding) Chair of Food Secure Canada (FSC). FSC emerged

through a conference at RU that focused on civil society input for food security in Canada, a theme that was continued through their 2011 campaign 'a People's Food Policy for Canada'. Incorporated as a non-profit in 2006, it was originally "a Canada-wide alliance of civil society organizations and individuals" (FSC, 2009) according to its financial statements in 2009, when its revenue was just $7,498.

A quote attributed to Dr. Koç on his TMU webpage states "we are going through a global legitimacy crisis that is shattering our social, political and economic norms. Crises are periods of instability as well as times for social change" (TMU, 2022). On December 4, 2018, he published an article in Global Dialogue, the magazine of the International Sociological Association (Koç, 2018). Titled "Food Security Discourse: Challenges for the 21st Century", in it he wrote that some current solutions to deal with food poverty "ignore the role of government cuts to social assistance and the marketing imperatives of the agri-food companies in the rise of food insecurity" (Koç, 2018). He continued, "the causes of food insecurity are not due to shortages of food, but due to inequalities in access" (Koç, 2018). He admonished "the neoliberal interpretations of food security" (Koç, 2018) that conceptualize food as a commodity and a market-oriented system, and promotes food sovereignty and its sense of resistance to globalization. He embraces that food sovereignty recognizes food as a human right, and "emphasizes sustainability and resilience instead of efficiency in the production process" (Koç, 2018).

In the press release announcing his appointment to the Centre's Board, Joseph LeBlanc is described as "a life-long Northern Ontarian and member of Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory" (MLF, 2020a). In 2020, he was appointed to a five year term as the Associate Dean, Equity and Inclusion at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) after having served as the Director, Indigenous Affairs there since 2018 (NOSM, 2019). In 2017, he won a Top 40 Under Forty award from Northern Ontario Business for his role as the Executive Director of the Social Planning

Council of Sudbury and in 2012 he won a Northern Ontario Visionary Award, an initiative by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce. His PhD dissertation in 2014 was entitled "Natural Resource Management and Indigenous Food Systems in Northern Ontario" (LeBlanc, 2014). According to an interview on the NOSM website, he has also worked for Tribal Councils and Political Territorial Organizations (PTOs), other academic institutions, and First Nations Charities (NOSM, 2019). He is listed as a "Part Awards Adjudicator" on the AFI website, where he is described as "a big believer in asset-based community development and its possibilities" (AFI, 2022a).

4.3.6 Beth Hunter and the J.W. McConnell Foundation

According to the McConnell Foundation's website, its establishment in 1937 made it the second family foundation created in Canada. John Wilson McConnell got his start at the Standard Chemical Company, a logging company that also extracted alcohol and other chemicals, such as acetic acid and acetone from wood. Acetone was "particularly important in manufacturing explosives" (MUA, 2004, p.3) and as such, the company's chemical department had great success during World War 1. It was through selling Standard Chemical shares in Europe that allowed McConnell to "broker relationships that formed the basis for the financial success that characterized the rest of his life" according to the Foundation (McConnell Foundation, 2022a). Indeed, McConnell was "so successful promoting the products of Standard Chemical" that in 1904 he became the second vice-president of the company (MUA, 2004, p.3). Following a "hugely successful trip" (MUA, 2004, p.3) to England and Europe that year, McConnell returned to Canada having had contract meetings with British officials such as Sir Hiram Maxim, the inventor of the first fully automatic machine gun. McConnell resigned from the company in 1907, and found success in the financial world including in land speculation and resource investment, as well as investments in sugar refining through the "Imperial Trust" (MUA, 2004, p.4). In 1915 McConnell

became the president of the St. Lawrence Sugar Refineries and remained in charge until his retirement in 1953 (MUA, 2004, p.4).

By 1920, reads the Foundation's timeline, "he was one of the wealthiest people in Canada" (McConnell Foundation, 2022b). It was profits from the Sugar Refineries, as well as the Montreal Star Company, Ltd. that funded the Foundation in its early years. The Foundation's website also states that during the first and second world wars, McConnell was "a tireless fundraiser and instrumental figure behind a number of successful war efforts" (McConnell Foundation, 2022c). Indeed, one of his early personal philanthropic endeavours was the purchase of fighter aircrafts for the Royal Air Force. An overview of a biography written by William Fong and published by McGill Queen's University Press calls McConnell a "Rockefellerian figure in both big business and high society" with "a deep commitment to the public good" (MQUP, 2008).

4.3.7 Chris Fletcher and Boston Consulting Group (BCG)

To little fanfare by way of even a press release announcement, Chris Fletcher joined the Centre's board in 2018 according to its CRA T3010, or Registered Charity Information Return. Fletcher is the Managing Director and Partner of BCG's Toronto operations, and is a member of their 'consumer practice', with a focus on retail and consumer goods clients—"in particular, food companies across the value chain" (BCG, 2022). According to his BCG biography, his focus has "primarily been on designing and leading multi-year value-creation programs" (BCG, 2022). He has "comprehensive experience" in operations, in areas such as cost reduction, as well as in strategic planning and shareholder value creation (BCG, 2022). Under Chris's 'areas of expertise ' is listed "value creation strategy and shareholder activism defense" (BCG, 2022).

BCG is a "strategic management consulting" firm that "partners with leaders in business and society to tackle their most important challenges and capture their greatest opportunities". Describing itself as a "global" firm, it has three Canadian offices along with those elsewhere in

North America, Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Europe, and beyond. It is considered one of the "Big Three" consulting firms in the world by revenue, between McKinsey Consulting Company and Bain & Company. It lists sectors such as aerospace and defense, consumer products, financial institutions, oil and gas, health care, and retail under the industries its services. Under capabilities it lists 'pricing and revenue management', 'business transformation', 'climate change and sustainability', 'corporate finance and strategy', as well as 'social impact' to name a few. Under pricing and revenue management, the company has 'pricing consultants' that can "understand the needs and expectations" of customers in or to help companies "adapt their pricing methods to resonate with customers and drive growth". In a blog post titled "Solving the Paradox of Fair Prices", BCG makes recommendations on when best to to "us[e] supply and demand imbalances to justify price discrimination" and that "with the right understanding and the right approach, companies can vary prices in ways that mutually benefit themselves and customers" (Izaret, 2022).

BCG understands 'social impact' as the need for businesses to "serve all stakeholders" and the "power of business and capital to be forces for good". They purportedly work with their clients to analyze their business model to "create positive economic, environmental, and societal impact in ways that are profitable for the long term". Their 'social impact partnerships' include organizations like the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). One focus area under social impact is 'food systems and security', explaining that "the challenges related to food systems and security are complex and urgent", but that "BCG help organization manage these complexities" with "deep expertise" in supply chain management, and advanced data and analytics. As it pertains to 'food supply chains', BSG purportedly helps agribusiness and food industries "improve efficiencies along their supply chains in ways that are environmentally sustainable and that improve food security". In an article entitled "Your Supply Chain Needs a Sustainability Strategy" (Walter et al., 2020), the writers reference Larry Fink's

January 2020 letter to CEOs that "put companies on notice" about new expectations from investors and "other stakeholders" regarding environmental, social, and governance factors. They also reference their own "detailed study" that found that included in the benefits of "greener supply chains" are "lower operating costs" and a "continued social license to operate".

4.5 Philanthropic Capitalism and Politics of the Possible

Patel and Marya (2021) note that philanthropy serves to "shape the asking of questions,…extinguishing alternative ways of thinking about solving the problem". Marks (2019) refers to this as the "'philanthropogenic' distortion", wherein structural problems that are not immediately amenable to solutions that fit with a philanthropist's vision, beliefs, or understanding of the world are neglected in favour of emphasising paradigms of their choosing (p.78). Descriptions of the "sway and dominance" (Marks, 2019, p.98) of large philanthropic foundations in governance spheres often relies upon examples of these agenda distortions from mega-philanthropists such as the BMGF and Rockefeller Foundation (Valente, 2021; McGoey, 2015). However, this reliance on the best (or worst) examples of philanthropic capitalism misses the opportunity to implicate smaller, albeit powerful, foundations in similar acts of extinguishing.

Sangari (1987, p.183) notes that a defining feature of the 'politics of the possible' is that which becomes "*the* frame through which…all cultural production" is thus "homogenized" into a master narrative that is seldom dismantled. Guthman (2008a; 2008b) has critiqued the micro-politics of neoliberalism as being advanced through food activism that attempt to stand in its opposition, and a theme that runs throughout Shiva's (2021) recent volume on philanthrocapitalism and the erosion of democracy is the 'inevitability' of philanthropists' own objectives. As we see above, the politics of what is possible for FI solutions through the Centre pass through the "stifling monologues of self and other" (Sangari, 1987, p.186) that are shaped by the experiences and understandings of the world of long-time Maple Leaf executives or those who are entangled with

the corporation in other realms as the next chapter shows. An example of how this becomes tangible is the support of the Centre by Isaac Operations, described as specializing in "hands-on, front-line operational and financial performance improvement" (Feed Opportunity, 2022e). Isaac is said to have "committed $5 million over 10 years of in-kind support to the Centre", in order to "work directly with food security organizations across Canada to increase their efficiencies and impact". Before recent changes to its website, Isaac described its work with the food and beverage industry as "enabl[ing] sustainable growth through operations". Under this, they note that "whether it's dealing with the variability of raw materials costs or responding to heightened scrutiny from both regulators and consumers, food and beverage companies face constant pressure to manage a range of challenges while keeping operations cost-efficient". Here we see how Isaac's business-sense is believed to be directly applicable to the "food security organizations" that the Centre works with.

4.6: Conclusion

Through its board of directors, supporters, and the "ideation workshops" that led to its launch, we see that the Centre is guided by deep expertise in the business of food. Specifically, it is guided by individuals whose personal fortunes are dependent on the success of one particular business, Maple Leaf. Those not directly working for the company have built professional careers in academia and philanthropy that have become largely intertwined with Maple Leaf's and the philanthrocapitalism of agri-food and other industries at large. This has serious implications for the ability of entities like those who guide the Centre to objectively solve for FI in a way that is not biased against anything may threaten Maple Leaf's profits.

Chapter 5: Multistakeholderism and the Manufacture of Food Insecurity Ignorance

5.1 Introduction: Feeding Opportunity for Who?

"…According to Mr. McCain, while wages might be part of the solution, many solutions are needed – especially given the "excruciatingly complex" nature of the crisis. "There are many dimensions to the problem. There's multiple layers in the solution," he said. "And we do feel like we have something to bring to the table, but only in the context of collaboration with other partners." — from Hui, 2022

In this chapter I synthesize the information from the preceding chapters into an analysis of the Centre's work. Building on the previous chapter's description of the individuals involved in the Centre, and the origins of the sustainability rhetoric from which it emerged, next I examine the funding and advocacy work undertaken through the 'Feed Opportunity Fund' (Feed Opportunity, 2022a). From its participation in "multi-stakeholder dialogue" regarding national food policy, to the donees that it "collaborates" with, I explore exactly where the shared value in Maple Leaf's corporate agenda exists for themselves and for others. Second, I discuss the scholars that have been recipients of research funding from the Centre, while situating their projects within the greater landscape of food insecurity scholarship to see what gaps it may be filling, or not. Third, I analyze the organizations that have been recipients of the Centre's financial grants since 2018. As a long list of food redistribution programs experimenting with 'innovative 'ideas emerges, the fund appears to be feeding programs that streamline and entrench the corporate food waste agenda (Spring, 2018; Lohnes & Wilson, 2021; Fisher, 2017).

Through a critique of the Feed Opportunity Fund, I endeavour to create a full picture of the Centre that compares funding decisions with advocacy to see where the 'opportunity' it is creating truly lies, and for whom. The picture that emerges is one of a new-age iteration of old philanthrocapitalism, that seems to have swallowed even those who were once radical, such as Food Secure Canada (FSC), and convinced them that being at any table is better than not being seated at all. This is where the legitimacy and authority of the largest food corporation meets the

final opportunity to exploit the last shreds of ignorance remaining around the solution to food insecurity. As the rules regulating its funding process show, the "bold, transformative change" that McCain calls for in the opening vignette of the Introduction are just small tweaks to the status quo of a food redistribution system that performs as a risk management tool for food industry waste. Here, the tensions between an 'uncertainty gap' that it was created to fill and the 'expertise' that Maple Leaf uses to give it legitimacy, come to the fore of the Centre for Action.

5.2 Gaining a Seat at an Anti-Democratic Table

In this section, I trace the development of the Food Policy for Canada and the seemingly disparate group of actors, including Maple Leaf Foods executives, that eventually formed the *ad hoc* Working Group on Food Policy Governance mentioned in earlier chapters. I explore how the Centre's own creation fit within this newly formed group of stakeholders who had prior been at odds about who should shape the food system. While some groups appear to be preoccupied with gaining a seat at the table, as I will show, Maple Leaf crosses the floor from a table at the Conference Board of Canada (CBoC) to a leadership role within an assemblage of actors that eventually form the Centre's board. Tracing the growing presence of the McConnell Foundation in food spaces draws a 10 year line that culminates into the launch of Canada's first-ever food policy in June of 2019, followed by the announcement of the Advisory Council. I show how these new relationships facilitated a rise in an undemocratic multistakeholderism in Canadian food insecurity governance.

On August 26, 2010, Beth Hunter joined McConnell as a program director and the next year the McConnell Foundation announced the launch of their "newest granting initiative", 'Sustainable Food Systems' (McConnell Foundation, 2011a) that would be led by Hunter. The initiative "aims to strengthen regional food economies in Canada" through a food system vision that "links growers and consumers in supply chains that incorporate shared values around

sustainability, health, and resilience" (McConnell Foundation, 2011a). The initial project priorities of the initiative were "multi-stakeholder action, where civil society organizations work with governments and the private sector, including farmers" (McConnell Foundation, 2011b). Conversely, a link to its granting FAQ from the initiative's request for proposals stated that "the Foundation generally does not consider requests in which the primary activity is local or regional, unless it responds to a pressing national social issue" (McConnell Foundation, 2011c). In other words, scale is important.

Though information about the initiative seems to have been phased out of the Foundation's main focus areas through a transition to three new themes, its most recent page dedicated to Sustainable Food Systems describes food insecurity as "the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food". It states "it is only by engaging everyone who has a stake in the food system—from farmers to policymakers—that we can create a future of food that is good for people and the planet" (McConnell, 2022d). A blog post attributed to Beth Hunter in 2015 on the history of the initiative states that initial support was provided to a project that became Community Food Centres Canada, and that several grants were made for organizations to "assess their regional food systems and then develop and implement market-based interventions to address gaps identified" (Hunter, 2015). In 2011, a partnership with Food Secure Canada "convene[d] grantees and other food organizations in a learning network" (Hunter, 2015). The post also includes "joining the investor's table of the Conference Board of Canada's Centre for Food in Canada" as a "notable collaboration" (Hunter, 2015).

In 2013, the Conference Board of Canada (CBoC) hosted its second "Canadian Food Summit" (CBoC, 2013), stemming from its launch of the Centre for Food in Canada's (CFIC) in 2010 with "twin purposes". First, to "raise public awareness of the nature and importance of the food sector to Canada's economy and society", and second, to "create a shared vision for the future

of food in Canada, expressed in a 'Canadian Food Strategy' (CBoC, 2013). One of the pillars of this strategy was "industry viability and prosperity", and was the first theme listed as a focus of the Summit, conceptualized as "increasing the output of Canada's food industry to contribute to national economic growth and our global competitiveness" (CBoC, 2013). A major criticism of the Summit was that industry interests most prominently featured in all of the presentations, panels, and plenaries (Renglich, 2013). Maple Leaf Foods was a 'Champion Investor'-level sponsor for the second year in a row, through an investment of $50,000 annually to CFIC that gave companies the ability to set the research agenda of the organization and advise in its planning. Also a sponsor two years running, the McConnell Foundation funded 10 non-profit organizations to attend the event, given the inaccessibility of the cost of participation (Renglich, 2013).

Meanwhile, FSC and its supporters had spent the preceding years undertaking a grassroots process of consultation and debate that produced the "People's Food Policy for Canada" document in 2011 (Martin & Andrée, 2017). In opposition to the CBC's Food Summit process, FSC co-sponsored the event 'Tasting Food Democracy' on the eve of the CFIC event in 2013. In a backgrounder document shared by FSC, the organization noted that some of the key issues of the Food Summit were "food scarcity being exploited for profit in capital markets" and "increasing concentration in the input, processing, and retailing sectors and domination of food systems by fewer larger corporate entities" (FSC, 2013, p.2). With respect to the latter, in parentheses FSC wrote "dangers include policy capture" (FSC, 2013, p.2). The document also noted that while several groups were concurrently developing their idea of a national food strategy for Canada, FSC was the only group "calling for a food policy in the context of food sovereignty, acknowledging links between health, hunger and sustainability, and including ordinary Canadians as our primary policy reference points" (FSC, 2013, p.2). A further note about food sovereignty listed, among others, how the framework "localizes food systems" and "puts control locally" (FSC, 2013, p.2).

In complete juxtaposition the year prior during the first Summit of the CFIC, Michael McCain gave a keynote presentation entitled "Scale, Productivity, and the Future of Food in Canada" (CoBC, 2012). In it, he repeats stats given by the World Economic Forum (WEF) regarding the need to increase the production of meat by 75 percent from current levels, and the "extremely complicated stuff" of "the challenge of a sustainable food supply" (CCCE, 2012). His answer to the "staggering challenge" of feeding the world population in a way that is "affordable" is "ramp[ing] up production" and "economies of scale" (CCCE, 2012). "Canadian food manufacturing industry scale matters a lot and plays a big part in our competitive success", he told the room of industry peers (CCCE, 2012). "Building a comfort level with 'large' requires open-mindedness," he continued (CCCE, 2012). "People can't afford themselves the luxury of opposing scale in food production for ideological reasons. Try explaining that to the hungry", he stated, and went on to connect the ability of Maple Leaf Foods to maximize production with the ability to give Canadians "access to the food they need at a price they can afford" (CCCE, 2012). Importantly, according to McCain, "small niche providers will not feed the world and they will not solve the affordability problem in Canada either" (CCCE, 2012).

In 2013, FSC reportedly extended an olive branch to the Conference Board in the name of volunteering to host the next year's event, but was rejected (Renglich, 2013). The organization reported once again being "active around the 3rd Food Summit" of the CBoC, "although only on the margins", and that "the event seemed to be losing steam as initial industry backers appear to lose interest". In a blog post on April 15, 2014, FSC's Amanda Sheedy critiqued the newly released CBoC's industry-led Canadian Food Strategy document (Sheedy, 2014). Interestingly, Sheedy took issue with the framing of a past 'multi-stakeholder group' consisting of industry, government, and civil society convened by Health Canada as a success, instead arguing that the Sodium Working Group was seen by the health community as "a failure to advance important public health policy"

(Sheedy, 2014). “Apparently,” Sheedy wrote, “the CBoC and its allies have a different perspective”, and suggested that it is clear that the goals outlined in the Strategy “are all subject to the first, and primary goal of ensuring industry prosperity” (Sheedy, 2014).

Then between 2013 and 2014, “the new FSC” (FSC, 2014b, p.2) emerged following the organization’s “revamp[ing] our governance” from a 25-person steering committee to an 11-person Board of Directors (FSC, 2014b, p.3). During its 2014 Assembly in Halifax, Beth Hunter representing the McConnell Foundation, co-hosted a workshop entitled “Beyond the Same Old: Models for Diversifying Funding” (FSC, 2014a, p.22). On October 7, 2015, the Maple Leaf Foods Sustainability Action Committee hosted one of FSC’s Eat Think Vote! panels at the ThinkFOOD! Centre, “focused on the urgent need to address food insecurity in Canada” (MLF, 2015). The panel consisted of Diana Bronson, FSC’s executive director at the time, Evan Fraser in his capacity as the Canada Research Chair in Global Food Security, Ron Bonnett, the president of the CFA, and several candidates in the upcoming federal election.

Meanwhile, in 2015 Hunter also co-coordinated a report co-funded by the McConnell Foundation called Sustainable Food Systems: A Landscape Assessment for Canadian Philanthropy (McConnell Foundation, 2016). Participants in the the ‘landscape assessment’ included Evan Fraser, as well as Jean-Charle Lavallée, a senior research associate at Conference Board of Canada. A profile of the McConnell Foundation’s “future granting strategy” included in the report stated that “the Foundation is putting increasing emphasis on understanding the system and interacting with it, including deepening relationships with the public and private sectors” (McConnell Foundation, 2016, p.36). The impetus for the report shared in the Foreword included “hopes and expectations for more fundamental food-related policy changes” that had arisen following a recent transition from a Conservative to a Liberal federal government (McConnell Foundation, 2016, p.2). At the same time that new mandate letters referenced a national food policy, the authors of the

"recognized the need to better inform and align our efforts in the face of unacceptably high food insecurity" and other issues arising from the food system (McConnell Foundation, 2016, p.2). "Our intention," the report read, "is for this report to help catalyze more effective, strategic and collaborative work to overcome these problems" (McConnell Foundation, 2016, p.2).

Meanwhile, in 2016, a "collaborative initiative" called the Nourish Health Care Collaborative led by the McConnell Foundation and partners, including FSC, "started with a simple idea: how can the hospital tray be a platform to dream big and transform our food and health systems?" (Nourish, 2022a). According to an infographic on the Nourish website, its purpose is to "leverage the Canadian health care sector's foodservice budget and reputational credibility to improve health outcomes", citing a $4 billion annual foodservice budget on behalf of Canadian health institutions reported by Restaurants Canada in 2016 (Nourish, 2022b). "It's time to harness the purchasing power and influence of the sector to capture the full value of food in care", states the infographic (Nourish, 2022b).

According to FSC's website, in 2017 the organization "engaged for the first time in a multi-stakeholder dialogue to develop a consensus proposal on governance to establish a National Food Policy Council" (FSC, 2022). Indeed, between 2016 and 2018, Evan Fraser "co-convened an *ad hoc* working group made up of producer groups, the food industry, philanthropy and civil society" (University of Guelph, 2022). In addition to AFI and FSC, the group's members represented Maple Leaf Foods, the McConnell Foundation, and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA). In its report "Celebrating 10 Years of Collective Food Policy Action" (FSC, 2018), FSC elaborates on this process, stating that it was undertaken "with a mind to gaining a seat at the table" (p.15). It also discusses "co-lead[ing]" this "multi-stakeholder initiative", and believed it to represent industry, agriculture, research, philanthropy, and civil society (FSC, 2018, p.15). The outcome, which according to FSC was a "consensus proposal on governance" (FSC, 2018, p.15), was a report

published on October 2, 2017, housed on FSC's website (WGFPG, 2017b). When reflecting on the process at the inaugural AFI Arrell Food Summit in May of 2018, the executive director of FSC since March of 2012, Diana Bronson, said "civil society has never been at the table before. We knew that was important, or the food policy would just be another policy on a shelf" (AFI, 2018).

By 2019, the Arrell Family Foundation joined Nourish as a "Core Partner", as did the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security in 2021 (MLF, 2021f). Its three core partners are now a representative from McConnell, Arrell, and the Centre. Under "to support organizational results and efficiencies" it lists options such as "calculating "best value" foods by evaluating social, environmental, and economic sustainability of choices" as well as "including purchasing of meat raised without the routine use of antibiotics". One of its "Food for Health Levers" is "advance sustainable purchasing", that is directly connected to nodes labelled as "less meat, better meat" and "values-based procurement". On a slide in the presentation "What's cooking in Healthcare?: A values-based model", the question "Who would you want to contract with?" is posed, followed by "the lowest bidder with some of your values, or the highest bidder with more of your values?". It became a charitable organization in 2021 and changed its name to "Nourish Leadership". Nourish's next steps are to expand its core collaborations to include "include CEOs, physicians, nurses, community organizations, policy-makers, food-service companies, and local food producers in a community of systems leaders" (Hunter, Huddart, & Senge, 2021).

5.3 Academia's Complicity in Food Politics

The conclusion of *Food Charity and the Psychologisation of Poverty* poses the question: "What is the value of academic knowledge as a commodity in the 'Hunger Industrial Complex'? (Fisher, 2017, as cited in Möller, 2021, p.115). Reflecting on an "empiricist obsession with gathering more and better evidence to inform policy", Möller argues that this "leaves no space for critical debate or reflection about the role of researchers themselves" (2021, p.116). As discussed

earlier, this serves as an illusion that policy change will come about by simply accumulating "discursive capital", as Möller calls it, "without political struggle or systemic transformation of the capitalist regime and its institutions" (2021, p.116). Instead, we must recognize research "as a site of truth production where subjects are made and remade through crisis and the extraction of knowledge" (2021, p.116).

Returning to the question posed, I expand on the *shared* value of this 'truth production' (Möller, 2021) in an age of philanthropic capitalism in food insecurity governance in this section. That is, what is the value to the corporation, Maple Leaf, of adjudicating a competition for annual scholarships worth $15,000 each that will "contribute to the body of knowledge on food insecurity" (MLCAFS, 2019). What does the Centre's "supporting research that advances a better understanding of food insecurity in Canada" (MLCAFS, 2019) tell us in the context of the 'daunting amount of food insecurity research' (Long et al., 2020) that already exists? In the following paragraphs, I consider how Maple Leaf may be using their relationship with the academy to shape the research agenda in Canada. As I will show, the Centre continues to conflate 'food security' with food insecurity, serving to ensure that the site of governance remains within the bounds of an 'insecure' population, while securing access to students' future work examining critical information for the company's operations.

According to the Centre, eligible applicants must be "conducting thesis research that seeks to fill gaps in knowledge on food insecurity" (Feed Opportunity, 2022c). Recall from the Literature Review in this thesis, recent shifts in the food insecurity discourse have aimed to remove the academic gaze from the 'object' of food provisioning (Guthman, 2008a; Möller, 2021). Instead, scholars argue that the interrogation of corporations and the business sector is what is needed most in order to solve FI (Mendly-Zambo, 2019). Instead, the Centre is selecting scholars for their "potential contribution…to the body of knowledge on food insecurity in Canada (such as

determinants, risk factors, impacts, and interventions)" (Feed Opportunity, 2022c). Specifically, the Centre encourages applications with particular interest in "predictors and risk factors" that aim to find who is most at risk for FI in Canada, their experiences, and what factors play a mediating or moderating role (Feed Opportunity, 2022c). Further, the Centre is interested in "impacts and efficacy of potential interventions" that examines "what programs, policies, and/or market instruments should be involved?" (Feed Opportunity, 2022c). Marks (2019, p.78) argues that "policy agenda distortions and research agenda distortions are intimately connected…When research agendas are distorted, the products of that research influence policymaking".

The winners of the scholarships for the past three years reflect a distorted research agenda on food insecurity that is focused on new sub-groups to locate insecurity. In June of 2020, the first round of scholarships was awarded, with the first winning proposal focused on "examining time, transportation and geographic constraints on food access in urban environments". The second would "examin[e] the impact of the BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program on diet quality and household food insecurity of low-income adults", and the third focused on "assessing the impact of community food programs in northern communities". These studies fit within the nutrition and dietetics and community development discourses that are contributing to a "false-sense of dealing with [food insecurity]" (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2019) due to the failure to address the societal, rather than individual or community, sources of FI.

The next year's round of awards followed similar approaches. The first winning proposal focused on "determining how public discourses on food security policy have changed over the last decade and what implications this has for the development of a Food Policy for Canada". Second, the next awardee proposed to "explore potential funding models and policies for a national school food program in Canada, as well as parent and decision-maker perceptions of school food programs". Third, the aim of the researcher was to "better understand the lived experience of food

insecurity among post-secondary students in Canada". In 2022, the first awardee aimed to "examine the resources and services needed to improve nutrition, food security, and physical and mental health for French-speaking pregnant women". Second, a proposal to "assess the relationship between food insecurity, adolescent mental health and interpersonal relationships" was chosen. Third, a winner proposed to "explore the connection between Indigenous knowledge and food sovereignty in Indigenous communities".

With the "Research Sub-Committee of the Centre's Board" (Feed Opportunity, 2022c) reviewing all applications, and then making recommendations to the Centre's Board for approval, Maple Leaf is able to adjudicate the 'Scholarship in Food Insecurity' in a manner that threatens industry the least. The body of literature on the lived experience of food insecurity is already robust, and as such the very guidelines of the award is a practice in strategic ignorance. Next, we look at what 'advancing food security' means to the Centre by deciphering between different types of food access programs that it funds.

5.4 Qualified Donees and the Hidden Waste of Sustainable Foods

In this section, I look closely at the organizations and specific programs that receive financial donations from the Centre in order to analyze how Maple Leaf may be using a guise of 'feeding opportunity' to feed their own business model. Through a review of the list of qualified donees filed by the Centre annually through the CRA, I have matched funds to specific programs either as disclosed by Maple Leaf or the organizations themselves. Direct food product donations are still distinctly part of the Centre's mandate, and emerging from a categorization of program funding is a picture of a corporation that is investing in the maintenance of a system that controls the risk inherent in unsaleable food products. Stifling the political struggle for food justice are hundreds of thousands of dollars aimed at "building the capacity of the food security sector" to increase "effectiveness and efficiency" of feeding programs (Feed Opportunity, 2022b). This

ensures the problems being worked on are located within an 'insecure' population, rather than those producing the most waste.

The list of qualified donees for the Centre is available through the CRA charities financial filings for the years 2018, 2019, and 2020. For the reporting period ending December 31, 2020, the Centre described its ongoing programs to the CRA as granting to organizations "engaged in testing and expanding innovative approaches to food security as well as to those that promoted knowledge sharing and collaboration about food security in Canada". It added an additional point this particular year, stating that "the Centre made financial donations to support Covid-19 related emergency food relief efforts". Here we see that the Centre has differentiated "innovative approaches to food security" from emergency food relief efforts brought on by the pandemic. However, despite its public-facing communications that income is the root cause of food *in*security, blending "food security" discourse into its funding requirements alleviates responsibility for the Centre to engage with programs that are focused on wage-setting policies or greater political economic problems.

Instead, it has a caveat in its 'Feed Opportunity Fund' guidelines that "while food does not need to be a core component of a project, *the work must be led by or include organizations that provide access to food or have advancing food security as a primary outcome*" (Feed Opportunity, 2022a, emphasis from source). Indeed, as Table 5.1 shows, the majority of its funds go to food distribution programs. Little seems to have changed in the corporation's operations, either as a business or as a charity. Not so long ago, Maple Leaf was making headlines, such as "Pork for the

Table 5.1

	2020* COVID	2019	2018	Program type
The Ottawa Food Bank	$25,000.00	$24,525.00	$36,233.00	Food distribution
Meal Exchange	-	$31,107.00	$69,761.00	Food distribution
Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society	-	-	$75,000.00	Food distribution
Toronto Centre for Community Learning & Development	$5,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Daily Bread Food Bank	$20,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Edmonton Gleaners Association	$10,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Ontario Association of Food Banks	$15,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Food Banks Canada	$750,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Greater Hamilton Food Share	$10,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Lethbridge Food Bank Society	$10,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Longon and Area Food Bank Inc.	$5,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Samaritan House Ministries Inc.	$20,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Moisson Montreal Inc.	$15,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Scarborough Food Security Initiative	$5,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Saskatoon Food Bank Incorporated	$20,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
Harvest Manitoba Inc.	$10,000.00	-	-	Food distribution
FoodShare Toronto	$405,500.00	$75,000.00	$150,000.00	Food distribution
Home is Where We Live/LifeCycles	$15,000.00	$30,000.00	$15,000.00	Food distribution
Hamilton Community Foundation	-	$75,000.00	$150,000.00	Food distribution
Depot Alimentaire NDG	-	$148,790.00	$142,140.00	Food distribution
Municipalities NL Inc.	$75,000.00	$75,000.00	$150,000.00	Food mapping
Social Planning Council of Sudbury	$142,500.00	$75,000.00	$75,000.00	Food mapping
Yukon Learn Society	$25,000.00	-	$25,000.00	Food mapping
Clayoquot Biosphere Trust Society	$15,532.00	$38,282.00	$22,750.00	Food skills
The Fort Whyte Foundation Inc.	$150,000.00	$150,000.00	$88,500.00	Food/financial skills
Community Food Centres Canada	$700,000.00	$200,000.00	$150,000.00	Food subsidies
Guelph Community Health Centre (The SEED)	$54,842.00	$72,250.00	$40,000.00	Food subsidies
Kamloops Food Policy Council	-	$10,000.00	$7,500.00	Food subsidies
Prosper Canada	$101,631.00	-	-	Income
Makeway Charitable Society and Foundation	$262,500.00	$175,000	$100,000.00	Variable

Poor", for its record-breaking hot dog donations to food banks run by industry experts. As we see, the Centre for Action is still off-loading the company's record-breaking waste onto "the poor", while investing in more innovative ways to dominate the market.

5.6 Conclusion

As shown above, the entanglement between Maple Leaf, CSOs, and academia has not made a tangible difference to the way that the Centre engages with food charity. Now entering its sixth year of operation, the Centre signals to CSOs and non-profits "innovation" and "sustainable food security" are viable, desired, and *required* solutions under their governance of FI. Further, they are setting the FI research agenda in ways that both frame and then filter the possibilities for future policymaking.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The big aim of this work has been to bring to the surface the ways that elite actors in the food system are now governing food insecurity (FI) in Canada through a multistakeholder paradigm that positions them in roles that constrain the narratives that describe its causes and solutions. Further, the goal was to show how philanthrocapitalism facilitates a social license for these actors to operate in spaces that were once reserved to critique corporations and the power and influence they exercise in the food system. Additionally, I aimed to show how corporate actors exercise a strategic ignorance regarding their own roles in creating and benefitting from the structural and societal sources of FI. Doing so allows corporations to now promote the identity of 'stakeholder' in policymaking spheres seeking to alleviate FI, where they are able to wield considerable power to ensure the agendas being set cause the least amount of harm to their operations, profits, and shareholders. Finally, the hope was to show the undemocratic nature of 'multi'-stakeholderism, and that the philanthropy being practiced by corporations like Maple Leaf that claims to create 'shared value' is rooted in philanthrocapitalist notions meant to safeguard their reputations.

As Chapter 3 illuminates, Maple Leaf's business practices are built on the very issues identified as major barriers to food security in Canada, as well as reducing food insecurity. However, as Chapter 4 shows, Maple Leaf's philanthropic Centre has enabled them to set research agendas and policymaking discourse in order to ensure these very issues are not being addressed. In Chapter 5, it is clear that the ongoing process of multistakeholderism in Canadian food policy spheres has been facilitated by, and continues to legitimize, a strategy of ignorance of the ways various actors have previously disagreed on who should be 'setting the table'. In the following discussion section, I return to McKeon's (2017, p.393) suggestion of fighting "conceptual

wooliness" in food insecurity governance to briefly recommend a new framework of FI. Implicating the relationships between multiple actors in the food system as the source of FI, rather than the issue being located within a site of 'insecurity' separate from others, will prevent co-optation by powerful actors to strategically set their own agendas for FI governance.

6.2 Discussion: Toward a Relational Understanding of Food Insecurity

Charitable organizations in Canada, including private foundations, are defined as those having "exclusively charitable purposes" (Government of Canada, 2018). The legal definition of 'charitable purposes' has long been debated in the country, particularly in terms of whether charities could pursue political activities (Singer, 2020). However, as the root of this definition, the 1891 *Pemsel* ruling as interpreted by Canadian common law, requires that "the purposes be for a public rather than a private benefit" (Singer, 2020, p.686). Therefore, every charity registered with the CRA is required by law to be 'for a public benefit'. In the case of corporate charities such as the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security, it is difficult to measure for whose benefit its activities are truly for. Further, determining which 'stakeholders' in the public sphere should be considered in this definition is even harder, especially considering the multistakeholder approach that is gaining policymaking steam. As Chadwick (2019) argues, enlisting a legal framework for enforcing the human right to food has its limitations when considering the legal regimes that have allowed barriers to equitable food access to proliferate in the first place.

As Mendly-Zambo and Raphael (2019) point out, income-based approaches to understanding and solving food insecurity have limitations, too. Although I have relied on the widely-accepted notion that food insecurity is an issue of income throughout this thesis, it is also through this work that it has become more apparent that income-based interventions are as easily co-opted by corporate aims. The Centre's partnership with Prosper Canada to "enhance and expand the reach of its Benefits Wayfinder" (Feed Opportunity, 2022d), an online platform targeted toward

individuals “with low incomes to identify and access government benefits…based on the life circumstances of each user” is a case in point. Investments in this type of program serve to further displace the responsibility of the state to provide more robust universal public services, and to reduce the imperative of citizens to challenge corporate power in the food system, as well as its role in suppressing labour power in Canada.

For example, a recent review by Tung, Rose-Redwood, and Cloutier (2022, p.254) examined food insecurity discourses based on the assumption that “the limiting factor to adequate and healthy food is consumer income, rather than cost”. Further, the authors took issue with the tendency for political economic literature regarding the global food economy “to blur that distinction” (Tung, Rose-Redwood, & Cloutier, p.254). They argued instead that there are inextricable links between income and food, but that income and food *production* in affluent countries are “largely separate issues” (Tung, Rose-Redwood, & Cloutier, p.254). Their framing that “the industrial food system, notwithstanding its massive social and environmental consequences, has improved nutritional outcomes for many consumers, albeit unequally” (Tung, Rose-Redwood, & Cloutier, p.254), all at once justified the inequity inherent in the food system and reinforced the status of actors implicated in its success as part of the solution.

It is precisely this type of continued focus on the issues of ‘lack’ that affords corporate actors to continue their search for evermore efficient operations, now in the name of ‘shared value’. While the academic gaze remains fixed on the issue of insecurity, those who have earned extraordinary personal outcomes from the same ‘unequal’ food system are infiltrating spaces aimed at reducing its harmful effects. While charitable food provisioning, and its subjects, have now undergone considerable examination to understand the governmentalities it produces, perhaps it is time for the site of exploration to shift onto the elite actors who claim to be charitable ‘for the public good’. Economic insecurity, and therefore food insecurity, does not exist on a spectrum that

begins and ends with the so-called ‘insecure’. Rather, at the other end of the spectrum is a wealth that is unimaginable to most individuals. Here is where our inquiry must now begin.

6.3 Conclusion

As Möller (2021) writes, “just as critique alone is not enough, neither is practice. There is no way around theory as a starting point if we are to transform social and economic conditions and not just invent new subjectivities better able to cope with the shocks of neoliberal capitalism”. Further, “after asking how we have come to be what we are today, the actual work must begin with critical practice and moving on to ask what it is we want to be and what is keeping us from becoming” (Möller, 2021). If we are to imagine new possibilities for ourselves as eaters, the philanthropic urge that has driven the charitable food system thus far must be understood as, paradoxically, largely unhelpful. Not because we are inherently bad people for ‘giving back’, but because maybe we do the good things sometimes in order to assuage our own guilt around the bad things we believe we have done. As Newfoundland and Labrador-based author Trudy Morgan-Cole wrote as she reflected on her own participation in food charity during the pandemic and in previous years, “Other people’s suffering [in this case, their inability to buy food for themselves] has provided me with an opportunity to feel good and valuable. And that’s … pretty ugly” (Morgan-Cole, 2020). Morgan-Cole goes on to ask uncomfortable questions about hers and her colleagues’ futures should no one need them anymore, in other words: imagining new possibilities that the charitable food system is preventing them from becoming. This is not a new reflection by any stretch, but is often repeated in the literature from interviews with emergency food providers across the board.

Applying this reflection to individuals like Michael McCain, set to retire next year as one of the wealthiest individuals in the world, reminds us that he has much more to lose than just the feeling of being ‘good and valuable’ should the food system shift considerably in its governance

and policies. Moreover, should we no longer think of ourselves as consumers with just enough income to buy what McCain and his peers are selling, we may begin to see the "soft discursive underbelly" (McKeon, 2017) of the industrial food system once and for all. Above all else, Maple Leaf's moves into a food insecurity governance role tells us that elite actors in the food system are facing a fundamental threat to their social license to continue to benefit from the structures and institutions that make us and the planet sick. Last ditch efforts to shore up social capital through philanthropic channels as the inadequacy of industrial food production bubbles to the fore are worth our interrogation. For they signify that we are encountering the final frontier of the status quo, with only the limits of our imaginations standing between eaters and our ability to create and become something new. And that is very powerful knowledge to share.

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