

# [***From AI running wild to collapsing ecosystems, Canadian government report outlines future disruptions***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C34-T3V1-JBSS-S156-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

May 22, 2024 Wednesday 2:55 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 Cable News Network All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 1150 words

**Byline:** By Daniel Otis

**Dateline:** (CTV Network)

**Body**

[*Click here for updates on this story*](https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/from-ai-running-wild-to-collapsing-ecosystems-government-report-outlines-future-disruptions-1.6895411)

TORONTO ([*CTV Network*](https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/from-ai-running-wild-to-collapsing-ecosystems-government-report-outlines-future-disruptions-1.6895411)) -- From artificial intelligence running wild to collapsing ecosystems, a new Canadian government report outlines 35 disruptions that could rattle the country in the near future.

"These disruptions are potential events and circumstances that could affect our society and the way it functions, as well as the way people live, work, and connect," the report states. "More than ever, the world is filled with uncertainty and unpredictability."

According to the report, these disruptions could be felt in as soon as three years. The top 10 disruptions with the highest combined likelihood and impact are:

1. People cannot tell what is true and what is not - three years2. Biodiversity is lost and ecosystems collapse - seven years3. Emergency response is overwhelmed - six years4. Cyberattacks disable critical infrastructure - four years5. Billionaires run the world - five years6. Artificial intelligence runs wild - six years7. Vital natural resources are scarce - eight years8. Downward social mobility is the norm - five years9. Health-care systems collapse - six years10. Democratic systems break down - six years

For the top disruption - "people cannot tell what is true and what is not" - the report points to AI's ability to generate realistic and divisive content.

"Mis- and disinformation make it almost impossible to know what is fake or real," the report states. "It is much harder to know what or who to trust."

The "Disruptions on the Horizon" report was created by Policy Horizons Canada, a federal organization that provides strategic foresight to help strengthen future government decision-making.

While many of the 35 disruptions are interrelated, they are organized into five categories: society, economy, environment, health and ***politics***/geopolitics.

"Extremely wealthy people use their platforms, firms, foundations, and investments to shape public policy-imposing their individual values and beliefs and bypassing democratic governance principles," a section on billionaires explains.

"Authoritarian regimes vastly outnumber democracies and the struggle between the two ideologies is messy in many countries," a section on democracy states. "Some authoritarian countries experience regular pro-democracy protests, while in many democratic countries, duly elected officials pass legislation that dismantles key democratic institutions."

The disruptions also range in severity from "world war breaks out" to "men are in crisis."

"Boys and men face unprecedented levels of educational dropout, unemployment, and loneliness as traditional gender roles are challenged," the report predicts.

Other potential disruptions include: antibiotics no longer work, food is scarce, civil war erupts in the United States and homemade bioweapons go viral.

"One disruption could have cascading implications in unexpected areas, and the occurrence of one disruption could set off others," the report says. "While the disruptions in this report are not guaranteed to take place, they are plausible-and overlooking them may carry risks in various policy areas."

"Disruptions on the Horizon" follows a similar 2023 report from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that outlined troubling trends to prepare for in Canada, including climate change, misinformation, government distrust and a global recession.

Francis Syms is the associate dean of information communications and technology at Humber College in Toronto. For Syms - whose work focuses on cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and risk management - AI represents both a powerful tool and a "real" threat with far-reaching implications for many of the disruptions mentioned in the report.

"I think this stuff is happening and it's important for the government to start to talk about it," Syms told [*CTVNews.ca*](http://CTVNews.ca). "There's going to be content farms out there that are effectively just creating misinformation. That's just going to increasingly, I think, generate noise and confusion."

Philip Mai is the co-director of Toronto Metropolitan University's Social Media Lab, where he researches misinformation, disinformation, propaganda and conspiracy theories.

"To me the biggest concern is that as this stuff proliferates throughout society, is that our level of trust of what's real and what's not, it's going to seep into everything that we do, and then the downfall is that it's going to make us question everything," Mai told [*CTVNews.ca*](http://CTVNews.ca). "The genie has been released from the bottle. These tools are useful, but ... like most tools, there are unintended consequences."

Syms believes that open-source technology, regulations and education will play a vital role in helping people recognize reality online.

"So maybe looking at making sure that people in high school understand what it's all about, or elementary school," he added. "I think that's an ongoing thing, but that's something new that we've not dealt with before."

Policymakers, Mai says, will have to pay close attention as AI technology evolves.

"It's like before we invented the airbag ... we're now at the stage where there is a car and we're waiting for more car accidents before people clamour for seatbelts and airbags," Mai said. "This stuff is being released faster than the laws are able to keep up and it will take the rest of this decade for us to figure out what AI can and can't do."

The full list is as follows:

Aging population has no support Artificial intelligence runs wild Basic needs go unmet Downward social mobility is the norm Food is scarce Men are in crisis People cannot tell what is true and what is not Values-based clashes divide society Biodata is widely monetized Energy is inaccessible and unreliable Homemade bioweapons go viral Household debt reaches a tipping point Immigrants do not choose Canada Infrastructure and property are uninsurable Large economies face public debt crises People cannot afford to live on their own Space is commercialized and underregulated The North experiences an economic boom Viral natural resources are scarce Biodiversity is lost and ecosystems collapse Emergency response is overwhelmed Geoengineering takes off Healthy environments are a human right Many Canadian regions become uninhabitable Antibiotics no longer work Health-care systems collapse Mental health is in crisis Billionaires run the world Canadian national unity unravels Civil war erupts in the United States Cyberattacks disable critical infrastructure Democratic systems break down Indigenous peoples govern unceded territory International alliances are in constant flux World war breaks out

**Please note: This content carries a strict local market embargo. If you share the same market as the contributor of this article, you may not use it on any platform.**

[*ctvnews.caproducers@bellmedia.ca*](mailto:ctvnews.caproducers@bellmedia.ca)

By Daniel Otis

TM & © 2024 Cable News Network, Inc., a Time Warner Company. All rights reserved.

**Load-Date:** May 22, 2024

**End of Document**