

Menu

 [Editorial](#)

 [Editorial](#)

[Journalism](#) [Canadian stories](#)

Bring back the draft!

Written by **Samuel Piccolo**
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Samuel Piccolo imagines a near and not so unpleasant future when debt-ridden university graduates work on small-town newspapers as part of their national service.

Putting university graduates to work as journalists is a way to eliminate student debt and prevent the death of local newspapers.

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You are a recent university graduate with a liberal arts degree. History, English, Poli Sci, take your pick (though probably not Classics or Theology). You have moved back into your parents' suburban home and have a healthy amount of debt from student loans. With a tight job market for a CV like yours, you work the morning shift at the local café to make your \$500 monthly payments. (If the café is too clichéd, then you live with an aunt. And install windows.) One day, you return home to find a piece of mail waiting for you. A letter! For you! It can't be a bill, since these processes have gone green and are withdrawn automatically. Silently pleading that it is not yet another wedding invitation—with the concomitant obligatory ostentatious gift—you slit the envelope open. A small card falls from its folds.

"CANADA REGISTRATION BOARD" it reads at the top, next to a facsimile of the nation's coat of arms and a six-digit identifying number. The card continues: "This is to certify that [Your Name] residing at [Your Address] is duly called to register for the national purposes of Canada this [yesterday's date]." A sloppy sideways signature marks the bottom of the page, and on the back are instructions for where and when you are to appear.

You feel slightly numb. You had heard of a recent bill that passed through the legislature that reinstated, after nearly a century of absence, some form of conscription to national service, but you assumed that this reinstatement was little more than the party in power making good on an election promise to enhance civic engagement. Besides, what sort of “national purposes” could you serve? The only real images that this little card conjures up are of bearded men holding Zippos to them in the '60s, or of old posters from Canada's own crisis declaring that “The Slacker Must Not Rule.” But no hot war looms, and the army seems to be well stocked anyway. The government has not proposed any major infrastructure project for which labour needs would outstrip supply. Why could *you* have possibly been drafted?



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Samuel Piccolo is a PhD student in Political Theory at the University of Notre Dame. He holds a degree in International Political Economy from Brock University (2017). His work focuses on the history of guilt in political thought. In 2019, he received the Dalton Camp Award, a prize given by Friends of Canadian Broadcasting for the best essay on media and democracy.

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- [Canadian stories](#)
- [CBC/Public Broadcasting](#)
- [Culture](#)
- [Public Policy](#)
- [Democracy](#)
- [Diversity of Voices](#)

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- [Friendly Brief](#)
- [Media Monitor](#)
- [Editorial](#)
- [Briefing](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Polls](#)
- [Policy Briefs](#)
- [Press Releases](#)
- [News](#)

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- [Governance](#)
- [Dalton Camp Award](#)
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