

Investigative
Journalism
Bureau.

Dalla Lana
School of Public Health



IMPACT REPORT

2022/23

THANK YOU
PUBLIC HEALTH
AND HEALTH SYSTEM
HEROES

155

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
DALLA LANA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Dalla Lana
School of Public Health

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155



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The Investigative Journalism Bureau (IJB)

Led by award-winning investigative reporter, Robert Cribb, the IJB at the DLSPH teaches the disciplines of investigative journalism to a range of students across and beyond U of T while they conduct major investigations that inform, inspire and effect change. The IJB empowers student and early-career journalists with the opportunity to have tangible public impacts on major issues shaping the health and wellness of the Canadian, North American and global populations. IJB's investigative reporting is integrated with Dalla Lana's Journalism and Health Advocacy Program, led by Robert Steiner, an award-winning journalist and founding director of the Fellowship in Global Journalism.

The IJB at the DLSPH actively leads diversity recruitment of student interns, recruiting through community organizations, faculty contacts, and other national organizations whose beliefs are aligned with its commitment to equity in order to: 1) provide unique opportunities to BIPOC journalists, and 2) create journalism which more accurately reflects our society by ensuring a diversity of perspectives in its coverage and newsroom. As such, the IJB at the DLSPH will continue to actively recruit BIPOC for paid internships, in order to ensure true reflection of pluralism within student and graduate groups and, ultimately, journalism pertaining to public health.

The IJB combines lessons learned over more than a decade moving dozens of public interest stories from classrooms to media front pages and broadcast outlets through the National Student Investigative Reporting Network, which Cribb founded in 2010.

The IJB teaches investigative journalism disciplines by involving students as core journalists and contributors to major investigative projects, while undertaking projects in partnership with academic researchers, major media and teaching programs in Canada, the United States and globally. Throughout its three years, the IJB has generated truly breakthrough work in both journalism and education



RECENT HIGHLIGHTS



Awards

In less than three years, the IJB's journalism has been honoured with six prestigious national and international journalism awards.

- We were recently awarded the 2023 CAJ Data Journalism Award for our series "Suspended." The series was also nominated for a CJF Jackman Award for Excellence in Journalism -- the second IJB nomination for one of Canada's top journalism prizes since our inception three years ago.
- Founding donor Gerry Gotfrit received an Arbor Award from the University of Toronto in recognition of his impactful support for the IJB. It was celebrated earlier this year at a gala event at the University of Toronto hosted by Dalla Lana dean Steini Brown to celebrate the IJB and its accomplishments at the Star.
- Last year, the IJB was honoured with the The Data-Driven Reporting Project award, a prestigious U.S.-based prize honouring intrepid reporting that utilizes data and serves underrepresented communities. Only two Canadian outlets received the award -- which came with a \$100,000 USD prize. The prize money is being used to conduct a unique and extensive investigation into Ontario's healthcare system.





Accomplishments

- Our series *Suspended* also had an impact at Queen's Park. An MPP tabled a private member's bill to reform Ontario's system for suspending licences as a direct result of our investigation. One story in the series led NDP leader Marit Stiles to grill Transportation Minister Caroline Mulroney during Question Period based on our reporting, which showed Mulroney's office had intentionally withheld answers prepared by civil servants to questions we had asked.
- We are about to launch an exciting new database on the IJB's website that will make available all previous provincial freedom of information requests since 2014. The project, which has taken a year and thousands of dollars to execute, will become a repository of every request for public records made to every provincial ministry, as well as their outcomes. We see it as an invaluable, high-profile, free tool for researchers, journalists, academics, civil society groups and the general public, fostering government transparency and accountability. This will be a legacy project that we will update twice a year. Depending on future resources, we plan to expand this to include other vital public disclosure, including those from police forces, universities and public agencies beyond government. It will benefit anyone seeking documents and data in the public interest.
- We are expanding into documentary work to amplify our print investigations. We recently partnered with a Toronto documentary production company and the CBC's Documentary Unit to help produce a documentary about Canada's clinical trials industry. This important new avenue for our reporting promises to bring added reach and impact to what we believe will be a compelling print series.
- We are also expanding into the worlds of podcasting and video. In addition to our regular appearances on daily news podcasts such as This Matters and The Big Story, we have partnered with TVO, which has devoted significant funding and resources to three projects currently underway. The broadcaster has started publishing In Our Heads, a six-part podcast documentary based on our inaugural investigation, Generation Distress. It brings our work to a larger audience, building upon the robust body of our reporting, and breathing new life into this important series. A second podcast series with TVO is underway based on our investigation into medically assisted dying in Canada. TVO has invested heavily in the project, including hiring U.S.-based podcast producer Susanne Reber and a New York music composer who is creating an original soundtrack for the project. Finally, TVO is also working closely with us on another project investigating government mental health services for Indigenous people in Canada. To accompany our print series, TVO will produce a video/audio package. We believe this is an important relationship that is just beginning to flower, and anticipate that they will be a key partner in several of our projects moving forward.



- In September, we'll be welcoming the second [CJF-IJB Black Investigative Journalism Fellow](#), Mzwandile Poncana. Poncana will join the IJB for six months to work on the IJB's ongoing investigative projects under the guidance of the bureau's editors and senior reporters. [Our inaugural CJF-IJB Black Investigative Journalism Fellow, Wendy-Ann Clarke](#), has now joined us as a full-time reporter.



- We continue training early-career journalists in other ways. We've had eight interns join us over the last year. Two of them are our new [Unifor summer interns](#), who will be with us until September. These internships, at \$13,000, are among the highest paid in the country. It's been especially gratifying to mentor and train these amazing young journalists so early in their careers. We believe the skills, attitude and commitment to accuracy and in-depth reporting they learn at the IJB will serve them throughout their careers. We're especially proud that the generous support from donors has enabled us to hire three of our previous interns after their internships ended. Together, we're building a legacy and quickly becoming a top-choice destination for the best young journalists in the country.
- The IJB and the U of T Faculty of Law just completed the second year of our one-of-a-kind [media law externship](#). The year-long externship brings enterprising young law students under the guidance of IJB Director Robert Cribb, Toronto Star lawyer Emma Carver, and Iris Fischer, the IJB's lawyer and a partner at Blake's LLP.
- The IJB has submitted a multi-year funding proposal to the Canadian Institute for Health Research. Our scientific advisor, Dan Werb, has graciously volunteered his time and resources to assist us with this application. Should we get it, we will effectively double our budget and reporting power for the next three years, creating exciting opportunities for more collaboration and in-depth investigative projects. We have also recently submitted a multi-year funding proposal to the Connaught Fund. Were we to receive the funding, it would significantly increase the scope and depth of our reporting on Indigenous issues.

In addition to these organizational updates, the IJB continues to publish high-quality investigative journalism that is influencing policy, inspiring debate and informing the public.

PUBLISHED PROJECTS

2022/23



In 2022–23, we published 20 in-depth front-page articles and podcast episodes under four different projects. Each has contributed meaningfully to public discourse and understanding.

Suspended

A multi-part series investigating Ontario's flawed medical fitness to drive assessment system. Medical condition reports are little-known but widely used provincial forms that some medical professionals must file to the ministry when patients have certain potentially dangerous conditions that "warrant a licence suspension," according to the ministry. MCRs take thousands of Ontarians off the road every year. In many cases, they can help make our roads safer. But the system is vulnerable to abuse, inconsistency and misjudgment by doctors and government officials.

[She confided in a doctor about her depression. The next thing she knew, the government took away her driver's licence](#)

[There was no evidence they drove after drinking. So why did they lose their licences for longer than Ontarians convicted of impaired driving?](#)

[Herpes. Hay Fever. Sexual 'deviations.' Doctors cite dubious conditions when billing for patients' fitness-to-drive reports](#)

[We asked the Ontario government about its controversial licence suspensions. Staff prepared answers. Then they were told to withhold them](#)

SUSPENDED PART 4 Some doctors cite dubious conditions

BILLINGS FROM A: Doctors report their patients to the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) using MCRs, forms meant to flag patients who are potentially unsafe to drive. After filing the report, doctors bill the Ministry of Health for filling out the form. MCRs result in thousands of licence suspensions every year. Many of them contribute to keeping our roads safe. But doctors and fitness-to-drive reports have criticized Ontario's reporting system as inflexible, overused, and at times punitive, an ongoing Toronto Star investigation has found.



Medical condition reports (MCR) are a key tool in making the province's roads safer. But drivers whose licences are suspended unnecessarily often face dramatic consequences.

get my licence back. Dalea "feels more inclined to share diagnosis with the ministry of transportation rather than his own patients," reads another review from 2006 complaining of Dalea "standards and practices." In response to these allegations, Dalea said, "The comments are selective, anonymous, unverified and without context — though I will note that physicians report the clinical information and the Ministry of Transportation, not the physician, makes the decision about an individual patient."

He also pointed to four recent reviews on his MCRs page, all of which were five-star ratings. All praised Dalea, with one calling him "very knowledgeable and friendly." More MCRs are filed at The Ottawa Hospital's General Campus — 7,054 over the decade reviewed by the Star and ILE — than almost any other hospital in the province. Two physicians — Dalea and one other physician listed in the data as specialist in orthopaedic surgery who filed just over 1,000 while at the hospital — accounted for about 77 percent of the hospital's total.

Hospitals are not involved when physicians bill OHIP for filing MCRs, The Ottawa Hospital said in a statement.

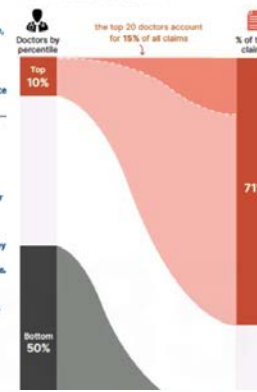
Some doctors have billed thousands of MCRs using a wide variety of conditions, according to the OHIP data. A doctor who practiced family/general medicine in Bowmanville billed for 3,687 MCRs from April 2018 to December 2020, many for commonly reported conditions, such as urinary tract disease, venereal disease like herpes, hay fever, and "disorders of mental health."

The number of MCRs billed "definitely seems excessive," says Critchard, who used to practice family medicine. "I think that's extreme." At an average rate of roughly one MCR per day, the doctor is the third-highest MCR biller in Ontario, according to the data. The billing address found in the data matches the address of Dr. Benjamin Palko, who had a family practice at the Bowmanville Health Centre east of Oshawa. Palko now practices at Lakeshore Health in Oshawa.

In a 2014 YouTube video, Palko states the address and suite num-

BEHIND THE BILLINGS

More than 16,000 Ontario doctors have filed at least one medical condition report from 2011 to 2020 — and some have filed much, much more. Of the 340,640 reports filed:



“We know that for many people, a driver’s licence is the key to mobility, independence and social connection. Any misuse of this process disregards the trust patients place in their physicians and the regulatory framework by which they must operate.”

HARVEY MACK
MAYOR OF KIM
CITY
TORONTO



How Ontario's program to make roads safer is ensnaring drivers who pose no threat, imperiling livelihoods and sowing distrust

Suspended

DAVID JACKSON FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Choosing Death

Canada has expanded eligibility to the medical assistance in dying program to include those who aren't actually dying, removing the requirement that applicants have a fatal or terminal condition that would make their natural death "reasonably foreseeable." The controversial change has contributed to a jump in the number of Canadians ending their lives upon request.

[Michael's choice](#)



STAR/IB INVESTIGATION

Spread hatred. Face courts. Repeat. Why Canada's 'weak' laws are failing to address the rise of hate

As Canada's hate problem reaches new heights, its justice system has failed to dissuade hate spreaders who repeatedly target vulnerable groups.

By Robert Cribb Staff Reporter
Inori Roy Investigative Journalism Bureau
Charlie Buckley
Mashal Butt

Fri., Jan. 28, 2022 | @15 min. read

Article was updated Feb. 24, 2022

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Hate Crimes

An ongoing series investigating hate crimes in Canada. Canada's hate problem is reaching new heights, but its justice system has failed to dissuade prolific purveyors of hate and discrimination who repeatedly target vulnerable groups. A national analysis of hate-related civil, criminal and human rights tribunal cases reveals Canadians who have faced up to four separate hearings for alleged acts of hatred or discrimination. Each has been found to have engaged in behaviour described by a court or tribunal as discriminatory or hateful, received penalties or orders to stop, and then proceeded to carry out similar acts in open defiance.

[Spread hatred. Face courts. Repeat. Why Canada's 'weak' laws are failing to address the rise of hate](#)

Invisible Threat

An ongoing investigation into radon exposure in Canada, conducted in collaboration with Canada's leading radon scientists at the University of Calgary. Radon is an invisible, odourless radioactive gas that is naturally emitted from uranium in soil and enters homes, where it can concentrate. When radon is inhaled, it can damage DNA in the lungs and cause cancer. The carcinogen is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in Canada, estimated to be responsible for more than 3,000 deaths a year — more than from motor vehicle collisions. The Investigative Journalism Bureau and the Toronto Star worked in collaboration with researchers with the University of Calgary and Evict Radon to obtain 30,000 test results from across the country.

We also published a story about alleged radioactive waste underneath homes in Elliot Lake, a small city in Northern Ontario. We obtained exclusive access to more than 3,000 documents that detail the town's history and the alleged waste.

[She found out she'd been breathing a cancer-causing gas for over a decade. So why won't Canada's health-care system let her get her lungs tested?](#)

[They thought they'd found an affordable place to live. They were never told about the radioactive mining waste](#)

Screening advised for smokers only

RADON FROM A1

As Canadians find themselves spending more time at home than ever before, that threat is becoming increasingly urgent, an ongoing Toronto Star/Investigative Journalism Bureau (IJB) investigation has found.

The guideline established by the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care in 2016 recommends lung screenings for adults aged 55 to 74 who have a significant history of smoking.

For everyone else, the guideline recommends "not screening for lung cancer."

Screening programs don't have any evidence that demonstrate a benefit for an individual's possible lung cancer risk from radon exposure, said Alan Tomchuk, a professor of medicine at the University of Calgary and medical lead for Alberta's lung cancer screening program.

"It's a gap in our knowledge," he said.

And while researchers are working on the problem, Canada is currently missing "700 per cent" of radon-related lung cancers in people who haven't smoked, he said.

"We're not catching a lot with screening because it's simply not on the radar."

Dr. Scott Klambach, vice-chair of the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, calls the benefits of screening Canadians with high radon exposure "an open question worth inquiry."

"If you found there are people at high radon exposure that put them at high risk of lung cancer, would they have the same benefits as those other populations who've been studied for a lung cancer screening?" he asks. "I think it's an excellent question."

Health Canada supports the addition of high radon exposure as a qualifier for publicly funded lung cancer screening, an official told the IJB.

"We would like to see a included one-time, with a new screening program, there's an opportunity to educate about risk," said Kelley Kish, manager of Health Canada's radon outreach and stakeholder engagement program.

The program and territories that run the lung screening programs would have to implement the implementation of screening, Kish said.

"It's not Health Canada alone."

Goodman and his fellow researchers at Evict Radon — an organization of Canadian scientists and scholars working on solutions to radon — said the country's radon problem — has been largely ignored for as long as 20 years.

"Forty per cent of people who will get lung cancer are not yet, not even going to be testable for screening," he said.

Canadian exposure to radon radiation has spiked 90 per cent on average since the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a report from the IJB.

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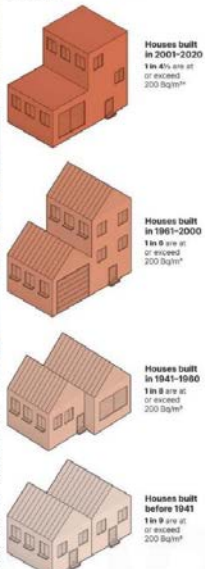
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Leanne Sunjula, a non-smoker, was told she would have to pay out of pocket for a lung test after she found radon levels in her Calgary home were way above federal guidelines.

RADON EXPOSURE DEPENDS ON WHEN YOUR HOUSE WAS BUILT

Newer houses have higher levels of radon, but older ones are riskier.



Health Canada's national radon guideline is 200 becquerels per cubic metre (Bq/m³). SOURCE: EVICT RADON NATIONAL STUDY (BQ/M³ BY HOUSE TYPE)

Right now, it's this frustration that there's that someone to turn on the health-care side.

She said lung cancer typically only shows symptoms in the later stages, she is aware of what lies ahead for her and frustrated at the lack of screening options available.

"If I can have with a lung cancer diagnosis, then I would be very, very angry that there was nothing in the health-care system to help me when I knew I could potentially be a problem," she said. "Right now, it's this frustration that there's just nowhere to turn on the health-care side."

It's just a very dear gap that needs to be looked at.

'They're ... hoping that we will all just

ELLIOT LAKE FROM A1

could have an impact on health-care systems," said Alan Goodman, an associate professor at the University of Calgary's Cumulative Impact Institute and the Canada Research Chair in Radiation Exposure Assessment, who is also a member of the IJB's research team.

He said the IJB's research team is working to establish the link between radon exposure and cancer risk in the area.

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EVICT RADON FROM A1

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NEXT STEPS



Expanding our Collaborative Network

The IJB is eager to expand our network of partners and collaborators so that we can continue to lead innovative, large-scale investigations. Since the resounding success of *Generation Distress*, we've been eager to replicate and improve upon our collaborative model. We've been doing it with some of our projects but this is time-consuming, resource-intensive work.

Our network includes some of the best journalism schools in North America, including City University New York, Syracuse University, Stanford University, the University of Missouri, the University of British Columbia and Toronto Metropolitan University. There are countless exciting possibilities for IJB journalism when we create a continental -- and potentially global -- team consisting of the best students at each university led by distinguished instructors under the editorial direction of the IJB. We'll be welcoming a new cohort of students from these schools in the coming weeks and months to work on an exciting new project.

In addition to our student networks, we've cultivated an impressive international consortium of media outlets, who, depending on the story and project, may wish to partner with the IJB. Our [academic and editorial advisory board](#) is made up of distinguished academics, journalists and editors from around the globe, including Rebecca Coombes, head of news at The British Medical Journal; Will Fitzgibbon, senior reporter and global partnerships coordinator for The Examination; Kathryn Gretsinger, associate professor of journalism at the University of British Columbia; Lynn McAuley, former associate editor at the Toronto Star; and Ron Nixon, the Associated Press' global investigations editor. We meet on an annual basis to share our story schedule with them and there is always interest in collaborating.

Diversifying Academic Partners

We've been leveraging our academic partnerships and the resources at the University of Toronto to collaborate with academic partners on major public interest research. We are hoping to continue expanding this network in the shared interest of accessing unique ideas, data, research and resources.

We've named Daniel Werb, researcher, author and the director of the Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation as the IJB's Scientific Lead. In this role, Werb is assisting the IJB with Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Canadian Institutes of Health Research grant applications. Should we secure these grants, they provide the IJB with multi-year, sustainable funding and allow for us to scale up our operation.

Other academics we are working with include Dr. Aaron Goodarzi, Canada's leading expert on radon exposure and Alison Thompson and Trudo Lemmens, University of Toronto luminaries who research the global pharmaceutical industry.

Public Events Showcasing our Investigations

We have been looking at the prospect of semi-regular public forums showcasing our investigations. These events, hosted at the University of Toronto, would bring together the reporters who worked on the project, as well as experts, members of the public and policy makers to discuss and debate a given investigation's findings and implications. We think these events would increase the lifespan and impact of the work and reach different audiences. They would also facilitate public trust in our journalism by allowing audiences to participate in a meaningful way, learn more about our investigative processes and journalists, voice their thoughts, and ask questions of policy and decision makers in attendance.



PEOPLE & STAFF





ROBERT CRIBB, FOUNDER & DIRECTOR

Robert Cribb is founder and director of the Investigative Journalism Bureau and an investigative reporter at *the Toronto Star*. He has received national and international reporting awards for investigations into offshore tax evasion, child exploitation, human trafficking, dangerous doctors, environmental threats and public safety. He was part of the international reporting team that produced the Pulitzer Prize-winning Panama Papers investigation in 2017. Cribb is founder of the National Student Investigative Reporting Network, past president of the Canadian Association of Journalists, the first international board member of Investigative Reporters and Editors, current president of Canadian journalism charity Veritas – Advancing Journalism in the Public Interest and is co-author of *Digging Deeper: A Canadian Reporter's Research Guide* (Oxford University Press). Cribb is recipient of both the Massey Journalism Fellowship and the Atkinson Fellowship in Public Policy Reporting. He teaches investigative reporting at Ryerson University's School of Journalism and the University of Toronto.

ROBERT STEINER, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF FELLOWSHIP IN GLOBAL JOURNALISM

Robert Steiner began his career as a global finance correspondent for The Wall Street Journal with postings in New York, Hong Kong and Tokyo, where he was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, won two Overseas Press Club awards and the Inter-American Press Association Award. After leaving The Wall Street Journal Steiner received his MBA from the Wharton School of Business, at the University of Pennsylvania and then worked as a business strategy executive, first at The Boston Consulting Group and later as Group Vice President in charge of Strategic Planning for Bell Globemedia, parent of the Globe and Mail and CTV. From 2006 to 2010, Mr. Steiner served as Assistant Vice President of the University of Toronto in charge of Strategic Communications. He lives in Toronto with his wife, daughter and son.



DECLAN KEOGH, SENIOR REPORTER & PARTNERSHIP COORDINATOR

Declan Keogh is an award-winning investigative reporter. His work has appeared in a number of publications, including CBC, Global News, the National Observer, NOW Magazine and the Toronto Star. He is also a gold-medal graduate of the Toronto Metropolitan University's School of Journalism. Before becoming a journalist, he built houses and travelled the world playing music in a DIY punk band.

DENISE HAGGERTY, JOURNALISM FELLOWSHIP ADMINISTRATOR

Denise Haggerty is the Journalism Fellowship Administrator for the Fellowship in Global Journalism and the Certificate in Health Impact at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. Denise has fulfilled this administrative role since the fall of 2018. Prior to joining U of T, Denise worked for six years as the Administrative Co-ordinator at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes. When Denise is not busy managing the administrative aspects of Dalla Lana's journalism programs, she can be found drinking coffee, occasionally writing, listening to audiobooks, watching mysteries and spending time in nature.



WENDY-ANN CLARKE, CJF-IJB INVESTIGATIVE FELLOW

Wendy-Ann Clarke is the inaugural CJF-IJB Black Investigative Fellow and an award-winning multimedia journalist with a passion for exploring the ways in which history, culture, sociology, psychology, and other disciplines intersect to bring greater understanding to the news stories of today. Prior to joining the IJB, she worked at the Catholic Register newspaper, where she reported on a range of important issues and received several honours. With a background in track and field as an athlete and a coach, Clarke has covered a wide range of sporting disciplines and reported on athletics during the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for CBC Sports. She also has bylines with Yahoo Sports and the Toronto Star Sports.

MAX BINKS-COLLIER, REPORTER

Max Binks-Collier is an award-winning journalist based in Toronto. His work has appeared in The Intercept, The Walrus, Maisonneuve, the Toronto Star, and Healthy Debate.





MASIH KHALATBARI, REPORTER

Masih K is a graduate of the TMU School of Journalism where he was a Teacher's Assistant for the Investigative Journalism and Radio and Podcasting courses. Starting out as an intern at the Investigative Journalism Bureau, he was a videographer for Mum's the Word – an award-winning interactive documentary on the forced adoption mandate in Canada – a crime reporter for Radio Regent and Executive Podcast Producer for On The Record. He was also a senior reporter at Investigative Chronicles, a publication dedicated to chronicling the 1987 murder of a high school freshman.

ALINA SNISARENKO, IJB/UNIFOR INVESTIGATIVE INTERN

Alina Snisarenko is an upcoming graduate from TMU's journalism program. Prior to the IJB, she spent six weeks interning at CBC's Toronto local newsroom, where she continues to occasionally help produce the afternoon radio show. alina.snisarenko@gmail.com



NORMA HILTON, IJB/UNIFOR INVESTIGATIVE INTERN

Norma Hilton is an independent journalist covering everything from murder-suicides to K-pop. Currently a Global Journalism fellow at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, she's interested in long-form, data driven investigative pieces on human rights issues. She reported on murder-suicides and domestic violence for the Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting and worked as a producer on the WNIN's podcast, ¿Qué pasa, Midwest? Before graduating from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in 2021, she covered the #MeToo movement in Saudi Arabia and protests in Chile and Belarus. She received the British Council's Future News Worldwide award in 2018 after covering the Rohingya crisis, visiting refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh in 2017. Her work has appeared in The Conversation, The Canadian Press and The National Post in Canada; the Mississippi Free Press in the United States and the Special Broadcasting Service and Australian Broadcasting Corporation in Australia.

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