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## Canada the Good A Short History of Vice since 1500 Marcel Martel

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Canadians have been sticking their noses into each other's business for about as long as they've had noses and business. That part is perhaps no surprise. But what Martel does so impressively well in this concise volume is to uncover the mutability of that "business"—what he has defined as "vices"—in the long sweep of Canadian history. In other words, this is a book about the changing and highly contingent ways Canadians have understood taboos and prosecuted transgression. It traces what Canadians have been afraid of (HINT: it's usually something to do with sex or race), what activities they have tried to control (at every level from the familiar to the federal), and what kinds of tools they have used in an effort to protect a shifting set of ideas about propriety over 500 years. It's fascinating stuff.

— **Stuart Henderson**, author of *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s* (2011), features editor at [popmatters.com](http://popmatters.com)

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#### Conclusion

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To invest in vice can be a sound financial decision, but despite the lure of healthy profits, individuals and mutual funds have been reluctant to invest in this type of stock. After all, who would take pride in supporting the tobacco industry, knowing it sells a deadly product? And what social responsibilities do investors bear with respect to compulsive gamblers who have lost so much money that suicide becomes an attractive option?

*Canada the Good* considers more than five hundred years of debates and regulation that have conditioned Canadians' attitudes towards certain vices. Early European settlers implemented a Christian moral order that regulated sexual behaviour, gambling, and drinking. Later, some transgressions were diagnosed as health issues that required treatment. Those who refused the label of illness argued that behaviours formerly deemed as vices were within the range of normal human behaviour.

This historical synthesis demonstrates how moral regulation has changed over time, how it has shaped Canadians' lives, why some debates have almost disappeared and others persist, and why some individuals and groups have felt empowered to tackle collective social issues. Against the background of the evolution of the state, the enlargement of the body politic, and mounting forays into court activism, the author illustrates the complexity over time of various forms of social regulation and the control of vice.

**Marcel Martel** is a professor in the Department of History at York University, where he holds the Avie Bennett Historica Dominion Institute Chair in Canadian History. He is the author of *Not This Time: Canadians, Public Policy, and the Marijuana Question, 1961–1975* (2006), *Le Diable d'un pays imaginé. Rêves, luttes et dérouté du Canada français* (1997), and co-author of *Speaking Up: A History of Language and Politics in Canada and Quebec* (2012).

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