

Have A Good Walk



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Have a Good Walk

I watch my son
tying his shoes
long fingers working
a spider, making a web

He's going for a walk
He walks each morning
and every morning
I say "have a good walk"

~~

She Didn't Like Younger Men

She said
she didn't like
younger men
and I was glad of that

She would crush
a younger man
exhaust him
(succubus)
and devour him
(vagina dentata)

No, she needed an older man
one who had lost his faith
who no longer believed
in angels and devils
spirits and monsters

A man with stamina
with patience and guile
with a cruel streak
Who could watch her die
(la petite mort)
over and over
and laugh about it

Then dismiss her firmly
when he was done
so that she knew
it was time to sleep

~~

A Rich Man

When I was young
what I wanted most
was to go into a cafe
and buy a coffee
without worry about the cost

~~

Overalls

A black and white stripe
set of overalls
The kind a train engineer
would wear
And she would wear them for me
It never took long
before I had them off her
~~

When She Saw Me

When she saw me
she would clap her hands
run across the room
and bang into me
for a big hug
She was, if I remember
about mid twenties then
~~

Banal

There are some things
that drift up
from the past
and say to me
Tell

But I will not
Some things are family
Some are personal
And all of them
are banal

~~

A New Girl

I very much miss
meeting a new girl
and slowly getting to know her
hearing her story
over beers

Looking at her face
Realizing with surprise
that her eyes are green
or seeing that scar
above her left eye
for the first time

I miss that
but not because of Covid
I have missed it
for decades

~~

Chilkoot

Suddenly
unasked
I am in a tent
no, outside
perched on a gorge
with a tin cup
some gravel in the bottom

It must have been
on the Chilkoot Trail
and there, in the bottom
a bit of gold colour
the stardust
the reason for the path
~~

A Toilet in Japan

Some stories are lost
I stopped telling them
"Oh no, you're not going to tell
that one again"

And some I knew
would go as I told them
"Remember this, I won't"

The one about a toilet
in Japan
Really sore knees
and a large round-eye
in a tiny stall
Something about broken plumbing

I'm pretty sure
that was a good one
~~

Alcoholic

"I think he's an alcoholic"

she said to my mother

"Oh no dear"

she said from experience

"you don't know

what an alcoholic is"

~~

Good Enough

What did I know
about being a father
Where were my models
Who would I hear
when I said

But we muddle through
and they grew up
Last year (the year before?)
when I was dying
I asked their mother
if I had been a good father

She thought about it
then said "good enough"

~~

A Famous Poet

I'll never be
a famous poet
or make a living
taking photographs
But that's OK

I look around the house
and most of what I see
I built
No need for money,
no need for fame
which brings money,
when you can make
for yourself
~~

On Your Side

My mother asked me one day
why my girlfriend
called her for advice
"Doesn't she have a mother
of her own? I'm supposed to be
on your side"

~~

Not Thanking Her

Listen boy
one of the worst things
you can do
is to start taking your coffee
from her
and not thanking her
When you do that
you start to figure
that it's her job
and your due

It's not your due
and to stop thinking that
you make sure
that every once in a while
you make coffee for her
That way
you might not wake up
one night
with the cold edge of a knife
pressed against your throat

~~

Pro Health

He was the guy
who did new boxes
for toothpaste

Same formula since 1957
but each year
he had to come up
with a new design
and new words
to suggest good things

This year was Pro Health
He was pleased with that
so much better
than anti-cavity
and who's not Pro Health?

~~

Nothing Happens

Each day
I wait for something to happen
worth writing about
And each day
nothing happens
So I write about that
~~

Build Up the Fire

Some people tell me
they are getting Covid Fatigue
and I worry
that they are sick
But no, they are just tired
of being stuck indoors
with nowhere to go
The stores are closed
The ice and snow

Oh my Canadians
it's only cabin fever
time to sleep
time to write
and carve in front
of the wood stove
To sew new clothes
and mend the old
To knit another sweater
And to chase your partner
naked around the cabin
Build up the fire

~~

Unattached

Baptized Anglican
Presbyterian Sunday School
In the organ loft with Gramma
at the Catholic Church
I guess I was luckier
than most

Never attached
I didn't really get Existentialism
My reaction "Yeah, and..."
Not realizing I should be adrift
bereft

I had the practice
of losing my religion
each time I walked
out the big front doors
~~

Domestic Violence

For all the years
of making the world safe
for the United Fruit Company
it amused me
to see police
with guns drawn
and desks shoved
in front of doors
~~

Stay Home

Is it a sinus
draining into a throat
Dry winter air
making the nose run
Or is it the start
of the plague

And so the end
of my life
Ended by the virus
my body reacting
drowning me

Or ended by cancer
my cells growing, hollowing
my insides with useless numbers
while I am kept outside
because the hospitals are full
of those with the plague

Stay home
Stay home
Stay home
~~

Maybe Tomorrow

I try my best
with a back
that has returned
to old ways
I wrote a little
and then did the dishes
which meant a nap
to let it settle down

I woke, made the coffee
and had to settle down again
You are late home
so I will try to make dinner
without making it badly
and no doubt
will need to lie down
yet again

Not a productive day
a couple of poems
and some puttering
in the kitchen
But maybe tomorrow
~~

Mysterious Portents

The coffee machine
sounds like a dog
lapping water
Is it a hound from heck
come to bite my ass?

The bathroom tap
seems to be decaying
the scabrous chrome
taunting me
with promises
of failure to come

Seriously
a hound of heck
and a dirty tap
Not what you'd call
mysterious portents

~~

Lungs Spotted

We're a bit concerned
my doctors said
after a body scan
You have some spots
on your lungs

I laughed
Parents that smoked
a town that burned leaves
in the gutters

Started life in a coal town
and shovelled coal
as a tyke
in my public school
then out to a playground
made of clinkers

I was surprised
they could see my lungs
at all
~~

Since 1975

Driving through the old town
I wonder
how many times
I have walked, staggered
biked, driven
and ridden the bus
up the Gordon Street hill
~~

And Yet

When I met you I thought
"She's not good for me"
In five minute's chat
I could see
that you would break my heart
And yet

~~

What, Again?

Having spent forty years
contemplating the big death
with each kata I danced
And close to fifty
with the little death
the extinction of orgasm
I was well prepared
for that final death

"We have a few things
that we will try"
the doctors said
And suddenly
all is suspended

From "get your life in order"
to "who knows when?"
And a voice deep inside says
"What? Again?"

~~

Oh, DADA

Oh, DADA
those people were being absurd
in reaction to the war
and the horrors
of modern life

That's what I was told
but I don't believe it
I think maybe
they were explaining the world
as it really is
The world being far more absurd
than anything imagination
could come up with

DADA was simply looking
with open eyes
~~

Stay In Your Homes

Stay in your homes
look at the next village over
they are up to 380,000 dead
so stay home, keep everyone safe

Unless you go to work
or want some exercise
or want groceries
or want to visit your mom
or want to visit your cottage

But they look at the next village
and say in loud voices
"we want that freedom"

~~

My Heart Would Skip

When she came out of the lake
she would tip back her head
and her hair would stream
down her back
Just like the water
that streamed down her face
and over her breasts

Always she raised her arms
and swept her hands
from forehead to nape
smoothing hair already smooth
and then she would open her eyes
see me
and smile

~~

For Shelley

Of my various afflictions
diabetes is the most unfair
I never ate dessert
didn't drink pop
or crave chocolate
Yet now I am told
to change my diet
No more toast
No more cheese and crackers
No more fun

But here, kindness itself
is a bag of cookies. Cookies!
that I can eat
slowly, savouring each
thinking of a kind soul
who thought of me
~~

Oh Algorithmic God

Oh great algorithms
of the internet
what in the name of Mars
made you assume
that I wanted to see posts
of war planes

And how many different groups
are posting the damned things
Every day you suggest four or five
every day I tell you not to show me
and every day you find four or five
more

~~

Toronto Fences

The various neighbours
living along our yard
have replaced the old rusted wire
with Toronto fences

As high as they can
and ugly as sin
But I'm fine with that
I gain a foot of yard
each time
they put one up
without talking to me
(Toronto)

Where we once saw
across five yards
we now see
that Toronto fence
Still, more yard
and no need
to be polite

I walk naked
from the sauna
each evening

~~

Writing Shed

Saturday morning
and the family
wants to chat
The cat
wants to be amused
and me, I'm wishing
I had built a writing shed
last fall
~~

Critical Information

20 celebrities
it said
you might not know
are bisexual

Well, just so you know
I'm bisexual now

With no testosterone
I'm equally uninterested
in men and women

~~

Lee Miller and Man Ray

Oh my
I just ran across some instructions
for digital solarization
and of course my reaction was
why?

Solarization was a photochemical process
of random extent
Turn on the light
while you were developing
It was a random effect
something to change a silver print

Fine
What is digital solarization
except using some manipulation
to try and mimic an actual reaction

I dunno
Call me old
Solarization is real
unless it's fake
You figure it out
~~

Pompei

Stay with me

I can't

Please

My wife

My children

What about me

~~

The Hunt

The mind
unoccupied
Like a door
left open
Half seen things
Things seen
from the corner of your eye
disappear
into the corners of the room
I chase them
a word
an image
I lunge
~~

Not Swelling Yet

Walking toward town
with cheese on the mind
and Pam
walking ahead
returning

Some extra steps
while I stop
at every bush
to check the buds

~~

Dreams of Flying

We walked out
on the swinging bridge
half way
above the creek
and we swung
back and forth
our hips driving
knees bending
legs spread

I dreamed of that bridge
I jumped off
and plunging to earth
I did not wake
instead I urged myself up
up, up, up
and up I went
by desire alone
As I began to fly
I woke
~~

Minimalism

No matter how bleak the day
or how deep into winter we are
there are the little flashes of colour
berries on a bush
a bit of kale in a garden
or someone who has hung
shiny coloured balls
in their front lawn tree

Little flashes to remind us
of summer to come
and from those
perhaps we can learn to love
the minimalism of winter white

~~

Big Man

There he was
he was a big man
my father
They sometimes called him Big Taylor
his initials were B.G.
and he was there
in Gramma's kitchen door
to pick us up
for the weekend

I know this
because I took his picture
with my mother's box brownie
Not posed
just standing, waiting
Filling the door

It was decades later
that I realized I had grown
two inches taller
and 30 pounds heavier
than he was then

My Aikido teacher
was bigger than me
for years
until one day
in the showers
I realized I was looking down

All my life
I have been surprised
at my size
understood only in photos
or a glimpse in a mirror
or the labels in my clothes
~~

Come Up And

It used to be etchings
at least that's what the movies said
but when I was a young man
in school residence
it was tea
"Want to come up for tea?"

The ritual of assembly
boiling the water
selecting and warming the pot
gave plenty of time
for a chat and
Both sides knowing the code
that pot
and the cups
were often there
to be cleared away
next morning
"Would you like some breakfast?"
~~

Twenty Steps

After a dry week
we would take the kids
to Berford Lake
It was warm sooner
and longer
than Lake Huron

The dry grass
we scuffed through
from the roundabout
(has anyone had one of those
in his life
without being thrown off
usually after a whack
on the back of the head)
to the water
and that walk
of maybe twenty steps
would take ages
as the kids tried to catch
one in the clouds
of grasshoppers

In the water
were crayfish

~~

Disco Shirts

Why did that poem
have to mention disco
It wasn't so much the music
or the plastic floors
with the pulsing colours
The disco ball
Or the four inch heels

It was those damned nylon shirts
that stank
by the end of the night
The women had the tolerance of saints
I would not have slept with me
smelling like that

~~

The Boiler Room

The summer I got to University
the Wellington burned down
I never made it
to the Boiler Room
the bar where, I learned
the students and the bikers fought
every Saturday night

The next semester
I was the new kid
in an apartment of friends
who had lost a friend
a bartender who died
getting the guests out

For all the adventures we had
that past was always a space
I could never enter

~~

Frank At The Albion

For how many generations
of students at the Albion
(with the only Sweetwater
delivery system in Ontario)
did Frank pull a pint

For how many thousands
of homesick, heartbroken students
did Frank stand in
as father, or father confessor
Listening for hours

Or simply being there
Someone known by name
to slip in advice "you'll live"
or even the odd pint
"on the house" on desperate nights

~~

Mischief

The mind goes quiet
and from that quiet
you come swimming up
Not always
but often
Your hair, the way it
flowed down your back
Your laughter
The sparkle in your eyes
as you were up to mischief
I can't tell you
how much I loved you
how much I love you
how much I miss you
I miss you

~~

Go Ji Ra

I watched Godzilla yesterday
my favourite monster
and when he appeared
with his mean eyes
his frown
when he roared
I began to cry
I wasn't sure why
not until today
when I realized
I had been thinking of you
It's OK, Godzilla is here
all will work out

~~

Look Out

Another hot flash
and because I'm sweating
I become anxious
Fight of flight
Don't be stupid, I think
but the body
is older than the mind
and often follows
its own logic

~~

Chains

There are chains
and then
there are chains
But no matter
how soft
how invisible
Every chain
will slowly sap
the warmth of the slave
so that, day by day
the life seeps out
and death by freezing follows

~~

Tradition

The Dalit father
tells the reporter
"This is where my daughter
was sleeping
when the three high caste
neighbours
took her
They dragged her
into the woods
raped her
mutilated her
and killed her
They were let off"

And I think
not for the first time
that he should creep
next door
and slit their throats
But how do you fight tradition
how do you deny culture
Even if you are willing to die
Me? I don't want to hear
about this shit
So I turn off the news

~~

That House Again

That house again
that labyrinth
this time with fireplaces
in front of, behind walls
I must have been cold
kicked the blankets off

As to the story
I'm really not sure
but the FBI
kept giving me guns
every few minutes
another selection
in a box

I took the ones
that were cute
and tried
to find places
to put them
~~

The Sun Has Come Out

The temperature has bounced
up to freezing
and the sun has come out
once in a while
in this grey Ontario sky

I have lived long enough
to see forty-five thousand troops
and the backside of 45

I have watched
as a World War's worth
of Americans have died
of an imaginary plague
and the sun has come out
making long warm shadows
in front of my old car

~~

What is Niten Ichiryu

There is a poster
on my wall
a Budo Demonstration
listing many important teachers
who showed many important arts

I am not listed
but I demonstrated
and it tickles me
to look at it
know I was there
invisible in the mechanics

~~

Oh My God

She had to go to work
so I lifted the covers
to wake her

I don't believe in the gods
but I said quietly
"oh my god"
and wondered once again
how she came to be
in my bed

Believe in them
or not
It is good to have the gods
to thank
at such a moment

~~

It Starts Again

The bloodwork done
I ask the number
from two months ago
this one not ready yet
0.1
But without the less-than sign
0.1 the lowest detectable

And I suddenly realize
I have slipped back
into the habit of a lifetime
of expecting to live forever

Not being thankful
for another day
another year
to say "I love you"
~~

Love You Too Sweetheart

My daughter never fails
to say "I love you"
Her whole life
she has made sure
those would be the last words
I would hear from her

~~

Famous For Fifteen

I drift through this social media thing

and I am soon thinking

"I don't know who that is"

"I don't know that reference"

"I don't know that place"

and once again

I think

"I am happy with my life"

~~

Cozy As

Have my coffee
my Canoe Museum hoodie
my sweats
Stripy socks
some tunes

Why I'm as cozy as
Bernie's Mittens

~~

Tiger Yells

Tiger yells
from my desk chair
has he forgotten
that I'm in the house
"I'm in the back room
you deaf bonehead"
~~

Oops

Two walnut trees
grew in the fence
a traditional wire square
They were cute
I left them
to be cut later

But the next time I looked
they were forty feet high
and the fence
was now inside
~~

Poke My Belly

At 18 my girlfriend
rolled over in bed
and poked my belly, saying
"you're letting your body go to pot"

At 25 I caught sight
of my belly and thought
"I'm getting my man's body"

At 55 I thought
I was getting a bit heavy
my knees hurt
my doctor said
"fatty intrusions in your liver"

At 62 I was dying
skinny, fifty pounds lighter
but my belly remained
faithful to the end

At 64, no testosterone left
I remain alive
Twenty pounds heavier
and my belly is still there
catching food
pushing the cat off my lap

An old friend
but sometimes I think
"I should do something about that"
I've been saying it for 40 years
And that girl is gone that long
~~

The Disappeared

I have never waited
lights out
behind a closed door
not daring to breathe
as I wait
for the footsteps
and the hammered call on the door
to go with the men
and disappear
as if I'd never lived

But I can imagine

So I sit in my house
lights on
door unlocked
doing whatever I wish
Ordering toys from Amazon
Watching Netflix
waiting for the plague to pass
And I do not complain
"Oh I am going crazy,
the bars are closed"

~~

Earn Your Food

I close my notebook saying
as I always say
I can write more
later in the day

Knowing it's probably a lie
But my coffee is gone
and so begins the urge
to what?

A vague urge to do
something productive
That well trained I am
to do a job
~~

Stupid Brain

At 64 you would think
that my brain would cut
just a little slack for me

But no, last night I dreamed
that I was in school
missed the first class
and had no clue at all
where my next class was
or even what it was

and worst of all
it's Saturday,
in a pandemic
THERE'S NO SCHOOL
Stupid brain

~~

I Don't Like You Because You're Not Likeable

A white boy from a white town
I never spoke to a black man
until University
Never saw one on the streets
best I can say
is the Indian girl whose family
bought the funeral home
the most exotic creature I'd ever seen
She scared me, she was so fine

By high school
amongst the kids
of the European refugees
from the war
I watched the riots
the civil rights fights
of the USA
and I thought
I really thought
that by this time
seven decades later
it would be fixed

But it's not
It's not
some poor white cracker
can always be convinced
that he's better
than some poor black bastard
and the rich, the political operators
will do the convincing
And they got the police
we got the police

If the USA
wants to be that shining beacon
on the hill
they need to finally fix that shit
that racist shit
and stop telling the poor white crackers
that the black man is scary
because the scary man
is the white man
who has the police behind his shoulder

And here in Canada
we look across the border
and feel good about ourselves
here where we drive our
drunken indians into the countryside
and let them die of exposure
as they try to stumble back home
where we have the highway of tears
where a white cracker pig farmer
fed whores to his pigs
and buried their bones on his farm
We are not better than that
we are that

Oh the same old lament
the same old yap-yap
you been spouting for 7 decades
look how much better it is now
Better?

Look up, look around
a racist son of a racist father
Stupidly, openly racist
spent 4 years as president
of the USA
and look what you saw
crawling out of the shithouse
with the little crescent moon
on the door
Racists who were empowered
to smash down the doors
of the great, shining example on the hill
with their nooses and their guns

Look at our police
our military
and you see them coming out
of the closets
and say "I am a racist"
so empowered they are now
because they not only have the police
behind their shoulders
they are the police

They never went away
they just went quiet
Well now they need to go quiet
once more they need to hide
in the shithouses
of their fantasy worlds of race
and colour

and we need to send them there
and we need to continue
to miscagenate
until we are all brown
and the white boys
the white grandpas
need to walk to the front
to stand between the police
and the protesters
and say
back, back under your rock
back in your closet
back to your shithouse
it is not OK to admit
that you are afraid of a black man
that you think you can rape and kill
a native girl
even if she is a whore

And it is not OK
to kill
those you feel are inferior
just because you have the police
just because you are the police

Because one day
I want to be able to say to a black man
an indian man
an aboriginal man
I want to be able to say
"I don't like you"
not because I'm a white boy
but because I really don't like him

~~

Come Get Me

Here is my name
I'm old
I'm retired
and I am easy to find
Come, you poor white racist trash
come and knock on my door
I'm sick
and I'm tired
and I'm sick and tired of you
and your racist stupidity
your delusion that you are superior
your fantasy that you are smart

Come get me
bring the police
I've watched you long enough
I'm tired of listening to you
I'm tired of going along to get along
Come get me

~~

The Answer

Her eyes rolled up
as her legs shook
She bucked

and then gifted me
with a tiny kiss
on my ear

The answer to despair
~~

Massey Hall Basement

A central booth
underground
A coffee shop
owned by students
dug by students

I spent years there
thousands of coffees
(co-op money bookmarks)
thousands of bagels
(cheese and tomato)

I slept there
curled on that bench
(covered by my coat)
Juke box
pinball machine
All I ever needed
~~

University Days

I started school
in May of 1975
The University of Guelph
and I remained
until 2020
and the pandemic

So yes
one of those ivory tower types
And I sit here
wondering why so much of my life
so many memories
revolve around my school days
Idiot

And I sit here
listening to the Moody Blues
on speakers as old as that
made just down the road
Content

~~

Summer With a Boat

Water skiing, that's the thing
and my buddy, the joker
thought he would swing me
toward the beach

Too late, I saw the anchored boat
too late to avoid
so I dove off the skis
under the bow
under the anchor line

~~

Not Your Mother

No!
You are too old
Stop!
If the next generation
is content
with the world as it is
then the stress
of trying to fix it
will do you no good
Say your mantra
"I don't care, I'm not your mother"
until you mean it
~~

Summer With Waves

Body surfing, that's the thing
and the waves were high
and highest near the dock
as they ran onto the beach

It was fine, except for the last ten feet
where I was rolled, folded and slammed
into the sand and the side of the dock

~~

Leaning on the Bar

She walked into the bar
Of course I noticed her
everyone in the place
noticed her

She walked straight over
and stood beside me
I mean beside me
so close I had to move my arm
around her waist
I could feel the heat of her
all along my side

She ordered a beer
and paid before I even thought
leaned harder into me
as if that was possible
and drank her beer
she never said a word
and the first time she looked at me
was when she finished her beer
and said "gotta go"

I hadn't said a word
and I didn't
I never saw her again

~~

Warmer Now

A cold, cold walk
in the woods
but I am bundled tight
except for this bare hand
with a phone-camera
moving in and out
of my back pocket
The tips of my fingers
becoming icy

And I think of those days
as a kid
when the wind cut
straight through the jeans
And the worn out sneakers
were fine
after the feet went numb
~~

Trying to Write

Often we get
bitter cold days
with sun
and little wind

So cold
that your fingers
don't work
for hours after
~~

Summer Tires

Honestly
Propane trucks
with summer tires
on the Bruce
in winter

And we are driving
to the cabin
on a Wednesday
to clear the drive

She gives me her keys
and starts to work
a laptop and a data plan
while I drive
staying quiet

Enjoying the sun
and cursing the snow
that causes six hours
of driving
on a Wednesday

Because summer tires
on propane trucks
Honestly

~~

Williamsford Pie Company

Just about half way

Home made goodies
dark roast coffee
and maybe a grilled sandwich
with a bowl of chilli

Not to mention
(comfort for old men
at two hours drive)

a toilet

~~

Propane Furnace (for Nate)

After twenty years
of arriving at a cabin
that is colder than the day
I can't express
what a delight it is
to walk into a room
that is 14 degrees

~~

Car Napping

Riding in a car
a long trip
after some work

The sun is shining
onto my face
she is driving
and I trust her

So I drift
in and out of sleep
Sometimes
life is more than good

~~

Same Same Same

I drift through Netflix
looking for something to watch
there's Supergirl

aren't there nekkid pictures on the net?

Oh yes, I recall
I looked them up
(and other big stars)

disappointed
all these stars
two boobs
one groinal area
same same same

~~

Efficiency

If I watch
resident evil
the final chapter
does that mean
I don't have to watch
all the ones that came before

~~

We Want Choice

Too many years
of Saturday movies
on two stations
Too many years
of small local groceries

I don't want 500 channels
or four dozen movies
or an acre of toothpaste
You see, I always end up
with a crappy movie
that I watch right to the end
because that's what I'm trained for

and toothpaste?
I always end up getting the one
that isn't good for me

~~

Showing It Off

Ah, there it is
Katee Sackhoff's nipple
in Riddick
unless it's a body double
but it's still a nipple

Interesting things, nipples
it's legal to have them exposed
in Ontario,
thanks to a girl.... I'm sure she had a name
who wandered around
for three days topless
until, the story goes
the mother of a stripper complained
(why should she be allowed
to give it away for free
and put her daughter out of a job?)

But faceplant
won't let them be shown
I don't know why,
Sackhoff or her double
had one
and celebrities freak out
if the papps click them

Must be something
I don't know about...
Oh, maybe money
I showed my dick
(and the rest of my body)
for minimum wage
during my modelling career
~~

Detaching

I am detaching from this world
where my email once held fifty new items
it now has a couple of ads
from places I said yes
by mistake

And on facebook
I scroll and scroll
in absolute wonder
Advertisements, often for things
I don't understand

pretty pictures I get, trees
water, mountains,
and comments about people
or events

I have no idea
No idea what they are about
Does this continue
until I disappear from view?

~~

Mount Forest

Half way
to our destination
has nothing to do with kilometres
It's the small town
in a valley
where we have to switch
from CBC Toronto
to CBC Owen Sound.

~~

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