

## MAX B. NORTON

*Curriculum vitae* – October 31, 2024

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Ph.D. candidate, Vancouver School of Economics  
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### FIELDS OF SPECIALIZATION

Public Finance, Urban Economics, Economics of Education

### EDUCATION

- Ph.D. Economics – University of British Columbia – Expected May 2025  
Dissertation: Essays in Applied Economics and Policy Evaluation
- M.A. Economics – California State University, Sacramento – 2017  
Thesis: Gains from Migration and Marriage: The Final Years of the Great Migration, 1965-1970
- B.A. Film Studies – Columbia University – 2006  
Thesis: Spike Lee's *25<sup>th</sup> Hour*: An Analysis of September 11 Themes

### ACADEMIC REFERENCES

*To request reference letters, please email our placement office: [econ.grad@ubc.ca](mailto:econ.grad@ubc.ca).*

Professor Kevin Milligan  
Director, Vancouver School of Economics, UBC  
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Professor M. Marit Rehavi  
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Camrost Felcorp Chair in Real Estate  
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### CURRENT RESEARCH ACTIVITY

#### *Job market paper*

[Who Benefits from Local Bond Elections? Evidence from California's School Bond Reform](#)

Research supported by the Lincoln Institute C. Lowell Harriss Fellowship.

- I evaluate the consequences of a significant 2001 reform that increased California school districts' fiscal autonomy. I document the reform's differential impact on school facilities investment across districts and provide new evidence on the spatial sorting consequences of such investments. Using the reform as a natural experiment, I identify effects on public spending, household sorting, housing markets, and academic outcomes. Between 2001 and 2017, affected districts increased their annual capital spending per student by 60 percent compared to the previous decade, boosting their capital stock by the equivalent of three additional years of average capital spending. The effects of this spending shock on equal access to high-quality facilities and on household decisions hold important implications for proposed school district and local government borrowing policies in several states.

## **CURRENT RESEARCH ACTIVITY (continued)**

### Work in progress

State Transfers for Bond-Financed Capital Spending in California School Districts: Corrective Allocation and Implications for Municipalities

- I estimate optimal state transfers to local governments, examining how intergovernmental grants interact with local capital spending decisions and mitigate cross-jurisdictional externalities. Using variation in school facility grants, I provide evidence on transfer program design and derive implications for state policy toward municipal infrastructure and housing projects.

Private Insurer Exit and State-Provided Homeowners Insurance: Impacts on Households and Housing Markets in Fire-Prone States

- Using household-level data and a dynamic regression discontinuity design across state boundaries, I study how state-sponsored homeowners insurance plans affect housing values and household sorting in regions where private insurers exit due to escalating climate risk.

Social Insurance Non-Compliance in China: A Synthesis and New Results (with Wei Cui and Jeffrey Hicks)

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### Journal articles

[How well-targeted are payroll tax cuts as a response to COVID-19? Evidence from China](#) (with Wei Cui and Jeffrey Hicks). *International Tax and Public Finance* 29, 2022.

### Edited volumes

Contributions to the *World Happiness Report*:

(From 2020 through 2023, I contributed to Chapter 2 of the annual *World Happiness Report*, co-authoring with John F. Helliwell, Haifang Huang, and Shun Wang.)

[World Happiness, Trust, and Social Connections in Times of Crisis](#) (also with Len Goff). 2023.

[Happiness, Benevolence, and Trust during COVID-19 and Beyond](#). 2022.

[Happiness, Trust, and Deaths under COVID-19](#). 2021.

[Social Environments for World Happiness](#). 2020.

[Happiness at Different Ages: The Social Context Matters](#) (with John F. Helliwell, Haifang Huang, and Shun Wang). In *The Economics of Happiness*, ed. M. Rojas. Springer, 2019. Also NBER Working Paper No. [25121](#).

### Other articles

Retired working paper: [Well-being Analysis Favours a Virus-Elimination Strategy for COVID-19](#) (with John F. Helliwell, Shun Wang, Lara B. Aknin, and Haifang Huang). NBER Working Paper No. 29092, 2021.

Pre-doctoral: [Managing Grapevine Trunk Diseases in California's Southern San Joaquin Valley](#) (with Kendra Baumgartner, Vicken Hillis, Mark Lubell, and Jonathan Kaplan). *American Journal of Enology and Viticulture* 70, 2019.

## RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

John F. Helliwell, Vancouver School of Economics, UBC	Sept 2017 - present
Wei Cui, Allard School of Law, UBC	Jan 2020 - Dec 2020
Munir Squires, Vancouver School of Economics, UBC	Oct 2019 - Sept 2020
Jonathan Kaplan, CSU Sacramento	Sept 2015 - May 2017

## TEACHING TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

*Training at the UBC Centre for the Integration of Teaching, Research and Learning*

Foundations of Pedagogy, Sept - Nov 2022

Graduate Online Instructional Skills Workshop, Jan - Feb 2021

*Teaching assistantships*

Research Design and Policy Evaluation in Economics (Masters/Ph.D. level), 2024

Economics of Labor Markets (4<sup>th</sup> year undergraduate), 2024

Economics of Public Expenditures (4<sup>th</sup> year undergraduate), 2021

Introduction to International Trade (3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate), 2019

Principles of Microeconomics (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate), 2019

## FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, AND GRANTS

C. Lowell Harriss Dissertation Fellowship, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy	2024
CIDER Small Grant (\$13,115 for data acquisition)	2023
Fellowship in Happiness Economics, UBC	2018 - 2023
Four-Year Doctoral Fellowship, UBC	2017 - 2021
SSIS Dean's Award, CSU Sacramento	2017
Robert and Chi-Ming Dana Curry Scholarship in Economics, CSU Sacramento	2016

## CONFERENCES AND INVITED MEETINGS

WHY Symposium on Policy Evaluation and Causal Inference 2024 (planned)

Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting, 2021, 2024 (planned)

UBC Centre for Urban Economics and Real Estate Summer Symposium 2024

International Institute of Public Finance Annual Congress 2021, 2023

NBER Business Taxation in a Federal System Meeting, 2020\*, 2021\*, 2022\*

Urban Economics Association 2022 Summer School\*

NBER Graduate Student Workshop on Business Income Taxation, 2020\*

\*Non-presenting invitee

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Referee for *Journal of Public Economics*, *European Journal of Health Economics*, *Journal of Happiness Studies*, and *International Journal of Wellbeing*

Editorial advisor, *Global Happiness Policy Report*, 2019, 2022

Graduate Studies Committee Representative, Vancouver School of Economics, 2019-2020

## PARTICULAR SKILLS

*Statistical software:* R, Stata

*Spatial analysis:* R (sf), ArcGIS

*Machine learning:* Random forests, gradient boosting, neural networks, experiment tracking

*Computing infrastructure:* Cloud deployment, high-performance computing

*Programming & development:* Python, SQL, Git, continuous integration

*Languages:* English (native), Spanish (advanced/C1)