

Buy, buy Canadian pie



By Nate Smelle

IT'S JUST BEFORE 5 a.m. on Feb. 13 and I am doing what all the cool kids are doing?enjoying my first coffee of the day while watching Bancroft council's recent meeting online. Over the past five years I have learned that the best way to take in the news is in much smaller doses than I had grown used to the first half five years of my career in journalism. Even before I was officially

putting pen to paper for a living, for many years I basically lived with the computer, radio and/or television on?often all three pumping out news at the same time because, well, as fictional NASCAR driver Cal Naughton Jr would say, ?I like to party.?

The plan of course was, and still is to some degree, to soak in as much information as possible. However, as anyone who has subjected themselves to such a bombardment on a regular basis knows, it is easy to become overwhelmed by this overload of facts and entertainment. Watching, listening, reading the news these days, it has become impossible to absorb it all. There is far too much spin, and the growing influence of misinformation weaved into this web demands that when we take in the news that we do so with our full attention.

For nearly a decade now I have been writing on the dangerous direction politics in the U.S. has been heading, and what that means for us on the north side of our shared border. There has been great resistance from many who did not agree with my intertwining of Canadian and local politics and affairs with what our southern neighbours have been up to during this time. But, as far as I have been, and still am concerned, it is worth the odd angry letter or threatening phone call.

In the few weeks leading up to and after the U.S. election last November these personal attacks had never been so plentiful. When the votes had been counted and Donald Trump had slithered his way back into the White House, the emails from the most treasonous among us gloating about MAGA's infamous win started to roll in immediately. Well, considering there has not been one single letter or phone call from the previously loud and proud Maple MAGA Klan demanding that we bend the knee to the new king of American and his South African billionaire puppeteer since he took aim at our country, it is clear that at least some of these individuals are starting to see the light.

At a time when small communities across Canada are already grappling with economic challenges, American President Donald Trump's aggressive trade policies have made matters even worse. His administration's tariffs and economic coercion are directly threatening Canadian industries as well as the livelihoods of ordinary hardworking Canadians. Recognizing that this is especially

true for those of us living in rural and northern communities like Bancroft our local leadership has taken a bold and necessary stand: urging residents to support local businesses, buy Canadian-made products, and reject American goods as much as possible.

Every time Trump talks about making Canada the 51st state it drives home the point that what is going on here is not just about consumer choice?it is about our very survival as a nation. If communities like Bancroft are to withstand the pressures of American economic aggression and chronic underfunding from higher levels of government, residents must take control of their own economic future.

Boycotting American products and investing in Canadian businesses is no longer just a patriotic gesture; it is an essential strategy for economic resilience. For decades, Canada and the United States have maintained a deep economic relationship, but Trump's trade war has disrupted that stability. His administration has imposed tariffs on key Canadian exports like steel and aluminum, threatened the auto industry, and sought to strong-arm Canada into unfair trade concessions. The goal his owner Elon Musk has established for him is abundantly clear: to weaken Canadian industries and force greater economic dependence on the U.S.

These actions have real consequences for everyday Canadians. The cost of imported goods has already begun to rise, and if trade tensions escalate further, consumers could see even steeper increases in food, housing materials, and other essentials. As Bancroft's Deputy Mayor Wayne Wiggins put it, "Every time you go to a store now, people are looking at the labels." This shift in consumer behaviour is one that I have started practicing myself in the past few months.

Boycotting products made by MAGA-supporting American oligarchs like Musk (Tesla, Starlink, SpaceX), Mark Zuckerberg (Meta's Facebook, Instagram, Threads), or Jeff Bezos (Amazon) to name a few, is a good place to start. By deleting or not using our social media accounts owned by these individuals and not purchasing anything that puts a dime in their pockets, we take back the power they have over us that we have given them. If Canadians continue to buy their products while the U.S. government actively undermines our economy, we are effectively funding our own economic hardship. It is time for Canadians, particularly those in vulnerable rural and northern communities like those in North Hastings, to send a clear message: we will not bankroll a government that is attacking our industries.

Listening to the meeting from Feb. 11, it is inspiring to see that Bancroft's leadership understands that the best way to protect the community is to build self-reliance. Mayor Paul Jenkins has been vocal in his call to buy Canadian, emphasizing that supporting local businesses is a key strategy for long-term economic security. When small towns strengthen their local economies, they become less dependent on external forces?whether those forces are unpredictable American policies or an Ontario government that has failed to provide adequate municipal funding.

Ontario municipalities collectively plan to spend between \$250 billion and \$290 billion on infrastructure over the next decade. Yet, current trade agreements prevent local governments from prioritizing Canadian suppliers for public projects. Bancroft's council has wisely pushed back against these restrictions, calling for legal reforms that would allow municipalities to favour Canadian-made goods in their spending. This is a crucial step in ensuring that taxpayer dollars stay within the national economy instead of flowing south to support American industries.

Are the Conservatives Pierre Poilievre and his trusted sidekick "Captain Canada" the ones to lead the charge for Canadians over the next four years? Well, in my opinion, the answer is a resounding no! Both of these individuals have been far too cozy with the Trump administration in the very recent past to trust that now, all of a sudden they will stand up to this deranged bully and the richest men in the world pulling his strings.

Nevertheless, Canadians will likely vote along party lines as they usually do, so I will leave that alone for now. This "Buy Canadian" movement must extend beyond government spending anyway. Every individual has the power to make an economic impact by consciously choosing to support Canadian businesses. Whether it is purchasing locally harvested or produced construction materials, a pint from the Bancroft Brewing Company, McG's Cakes on Main, prioritizing Canadian brands at the local grocery stores, or vacationing within our own borders instead of travelling abroad, our seemingly small actions add up to a powerful economic force. As my father taught me when I came across my first bully at the age of nine: sometimes you need to bloody a

bully's nose to send them the message they need to hear.