

Common ground



By Nate Smelle

Less than 24 hours after Prime Minister-elect Mark Carney met with U.S. President Donald Trump in the Oval Office and told him that like the White House Canada would never, ever be for sale and/or become the Americans' 51st state, I had the opportunity to speak with Hastings?Lennox and Addington?Tyendinaga's MP-elect Shelby Kramp-Neuman about her plans for the next term. During our very candid conversation?approximately half of which is printed on the adjacent pages, with the rest found in last week's edition?we discovered that despite our differing political stripes, we agreed that the best things for Canada now is to come together and find common ground. In fact, throughout the conversation we saw eye to eye on more issues than not.

We agreed that, as Kramp-Neuman said, ?Canadians are really looking for a calm, measured, respectful approach.? We both acknowledged that cost of living issues and ?affordability has been paramount.? There was no disagreement between us when it came to recognizing that ?Trump tariffs, and the idea of the 51st state? were the defining issue of the campaign; and, that the U.S. president's threats were the driving force behind the majority of Canadian voters uniting behind Prime Minister-elect Mark Carney's calls for national unity. We even agreed that Conservative MP-elect for Bowmanville?North Oshawa Jamil Jivani's comments about Ontario Premier Doug Ford during a late night interview with CBC reporter David Common were divisive.

And while I am not sure if we agreed on the substance of what was said during the interview?since I, like Jivani believe Premier Doug Ford is a huge problem for the province of Ontario and Canada as a whole?we did both consider his remarks as being out of step with the post-election push for unity by all of the major parties leaders.

For those who missed the election night interview, when asked by Common to share his thoughts on Premier Ford, Jivani said: ?Yeah, well, look, Doug Ford just went through an election. I have differences of opinion with him. I don't like how he's managed health-care or education; but, out of respect, we didn't say anything; [the] federal party, we didn't get in his way. When it was our turn to run the election, he couldn't stay out of our business; always getting his criticisms and all his opinions out, distracting our campaign, trying to make it about him, trying to position himself as some kind of political genius, that we need to be taking cues from... I see Doug Ford as a problem for Ontario and for Canada. I think he's not doing a great job in running this province, and now he's trying to exercise his influence over other levels of government. And it's not like this guy is doing anything particularly well.?

?You did used to work for him,? said Common.

"I did!" replied Jivani. "I am speaking from experience. I tried to fix problems in this province, and he kept getting in his way. And all his goons around him all the time; they wouldn't make anything better. And now we're seeing him, because this guy's a 'political genius' because he beat Bonnie Crombie and Stephen Del Duca? And now we got to sit around getting advice from him? No, no! He has taken the provincial Conservative Party and turned it into something hollow and unprincipled, something that doesn't solve problems. He's glad-handing with Chrystia Freeland, having coffees and lattes with Mark Carney, and I'm sitting here saying, 'We need to be fighting for change and something new and something different, not being a hype man for the Liberal Party.'"

"Hollow and unprincipled, something that doesn't solve problems," I thought to myself. Well, that's exactly what I have been saying since 2018. Nevertheless, despite my agreement with Jivani and Kramp-Neuman, we are not on the same page when it comes to the leader of the Conservative Party.

As leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, Poilievre has built his career on a foundation of inflammatory rhetoric and divisive political theatre that bears a striking resemblance to the tactics of U.S. President Donald Trump. While Poilievre wraps himself in the language of "freedom" and casts himself as a voice for "working class Canadians," a closer look at who he is and what he stands for, reveals a consistent pattern of serving the interests of big business, while amplifying misinformation and conspiracy theories that promote divisions instead of unity or solutions.

Since he first entered the House of Commons in 2024, Poilievre has always been more than willing to exploit cultural divisions to further his goals as a career politician. For instance, in 2008, he notoriously suggested that, "Canada's Aboriginals need to learn the value of hard work more than they need compensation for abuse suffered in Residential Schools." Although he apologized for this specific comment, rather than distancing himself from such anti-Indigenous rhetoric, Poilievre has doubled down in recent years. In 2022, he spoke at an event hosted by the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, a far-right think tank that has questioned the severity of abuses in residential schools. In 2025, he also defended candidate Aaron Gunn, who denied that residential schools constituted genocide. His defense—labeling criticism as "misinformation"—was not just dismissive, but harmful, reinforcing a narrative that minimizes the intergenerational trauma caused by Canada's colonial past.

These choices are not isolated; they fit into a broader pattern of courting division and cultural resentment. In a 2022 podcast, Poilievre's reference to using "simple Anglo-Saxon words" was seen by many as racially charged and exclusionary. And his ongoing crusade against so-called "authoritarian wokeism" echoes MAGA talking points, designed to rally supporters against imagined enemies rather than address real issues like affordability or health-care access. I, unlike Poilievre's Conservatives do not see "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" as a threat to unity. Like the Rhinoceros Party candidate in Bowmanville—Oshawa North Adam Smith told Clarington This Week prior to the election, I believe "DEI is not a threat" it's the minimum. When people screech that equity is 'divisive' or 'woke' he continued, "what they really mean is they miss when people who didn't look like them knew their place and kept quiet. Sorry to disappoint, but the 1950s are history, and this time we brought microphones."

Meanwhile, despite his political posturing as a "working class hero", Poilievre's voting record consistently favours the wealthy and powerful. Time and time again he has supported tax cuts for billionaires and the most greedy, deregulation, and privatization—policies that benefit billionaires far more than struggling families. His proposed "two-for-one" regulatory rollback is music to the ears of corporate Canada but offers little to working people worried about workplace protections, environmental standards, or housing affordability.

In April 2025, over 30 prominent business leaders—including Fairfax Financial's Prem Watsa and former Scotiabank CEO Brian Porter—publicly endorsed Poilievre. Of course their backing was no coincidence. His platform, filled with pledges to expand fossil fuel projects, build pipelines, and dismantle climate agreements intended to protect Canadians from this all-encompassing global environmental crisis stealing lives and the ecosystems that sustain them, aligns neatly with the priorities of Canada's economic elite. All of this makes sense considering Poilievre has never held a job outside of politics.

The more we look past his strategically pointed slogans and nicknames, and focus on the ingredients of the snake oil that Poilievre spent the last few years trying to sell us, the easier it becomes to see that it is not the patriotic grassroots revolution he dressed it up to be. Upon this investigation we also find that unlike the majority of red baseball hats in the U.S., Poilievre's style of politics is also

?Made in the U.S.A.? Like Trump's Make America Great Again movement, it is nothing more than a far-right corporate coup, disguised in populist slogans. Just another pig in lipstick, leaning in to give us a big sloppy smooch before robbing us blind.

In true Trumpian fashion, Poilievre uses social media to disinform the public and incite misplaced outrage among his supporters. Furthermore, he has routinely demonized institutions, from the Bank of Canada to global organizations, feeding distrust rather than fostering constructive dialogue or offering solutions. His support for the 2022 Freedom Convoy protests?an event internationally likened to the MAGA insurrection of Jan. 6, 2021?only cemented his role as a polarizing figure more interested in disruption than governance.

Canadians deserve leadership that unites us and inspires us to do better; not a power hungry career politician who claims to speak for the working class, while continuously serving the interests of billionaires. Poilievre has had many chances to prove he's different from the chief buffoon down in Washington, D.C., but instead he has embraced the same politics of division, at the expense of working class Canadians.

As Kramp-Neuman pointed out last week, ?...he is who he is, so he's not going to try and reinvent this new person to satisfy the electorate.?

I have to admit, when I first heard the news that Poilievre was planning to stay on as leader, my first response was of a partisan nature. ?That's great!? I said to a Conservative friend of mine. ?Are you sure you guys don't want to give Andrew Scheer another kick at the can?? I joked. No kidding, the next morning I woke up and saw the news that the Conservatives had named Scheer to serve as their interim leader, while Poilievre tries to find his place in the House of Commons, and get back on the public payroll that was paying him a \$309,700 annual salary prior to the 2025 election.

Now, the partisan democratic socialist in me wants to leave well enough alone and let the Conservative Party fail to read the room by keeping Poilievre as their leader. However, for the sake of national unity and the common good, the best thing the Conservative Party could do for Canadians at this point is abandon their Trump-impersonating leader, and elect a new head hanch? who does not come with the divisive Maple MAGA baggage Poilievre is attempting to bring to the table again. On April 28, a record 8,566,674 Canadians sent a clear message to politicians of all stripes. That message: that we are done with the politics of division embraced by politicians like Trump and Poilievre.

If the Conservatives ignore this message, and fail to make a sincere effort to establish common ground that all, or at least the majority of Canadians can stand on comfortably and proudly, they will do so at their own peril.