

## The 51st state? Take off, eh!



**By Nate Smelle**

WITH THE FIRST sunrise of 2025 inching towards the horizon, once again we find ourselves looking back on the year behind us, in search of a guiding light to lead us into the year ahead. While I would love to say that the past 354 days have left me feeling optimistic about the next 376, I am not going to try and sugarcoat the foul stench of the reality that we have manifested in 2024.

In light of the recent resignation of the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland on the day that she was supposed to deliver the federal government's Fall Economic Statement, it appears that no matter how the cards play out, for good or ill we will be electing a new leader in 2025. A change in leadership at the top can often be a good thing?especially after almost a decade of having the same Captain at the helm?however, shuffling the deck does not always work out in our favour.

Having covered more than a dozen elections in both Canada and the U.S. since I first began reporting in 2012, I have learned to approach each one like a round of Blackjack. Anyone who has ever seriously invested any time in this game knows that unlike most other casino grifts, there is some skill involved in the game of Blackjack, exercised through one's ability to count cards. Basically, the art of card counting involves keeping track of the ratio of high to low cards left in the deck during the course of a game. The idea is that when more high cards?10s, face cards, and aces?remain in the deck, the player has a better chance of getting a favourable hand. When more low cards?twos through sixes?remain, the player has a lower chance of winning.

Although it is way too early to endorse or put any money down on a candidate, anyone who has been paying close attention to politics on both sides of the Canada/U.S. border in recent years, has a good idea of what cards are left in the deck. As the game stands in this given moment, it appears?according to the polls and the mainstream media?that we have a two waiting for us at the top of the deck in Canada. For those of you fortunate enough not to know who I am referring to as a ?two?, I am talking about the current head of the Conservative Party of Canada?possibly soon to be 51st State of America?Pierre Poilievre.

Don't get me wrong, as a career politician who has lived large on the public dime for some 20 years, in many ways Poilievre checks all the boxes as a ?conventional? candidate for prime minister. Unfortunately for his sake we are not living in ?conventional? times. Taking into consideration MAGA King Trump's recent and repeated threat to wage a trade war against Canada that would see a 25 per cent tariff slapped on all Canadian exports to the U.S., it is fair to say, or at the very least question whether the unofficial and un-fresh Prince of the Maple MAGA clan in Canada is in a compromised position to serve our already great nation. Recognizing the severe damage we could do to our economy and country by electing anyone who puts the priorities of another country over our own, we must be careful not to elect any members of Parliament with close ties to the MAGA movement and the incoming president.

Quite simply stated: we need a leader that we can trust to boldly defend our national interests, instead of one that kneels before this

bully from the south, and parrots his talking points every chance he gets. In an era marked by shifting global dynamics, the suggestion by U.S. president-elect Donald Trump to make Canada the 51st state is not to be taken lightly. While the idea may have been floated as a joke, it raises serious questions about our national identity, sovereignty, and the future of Canada's political and economic systems.

The reality is that the prospect of Canada becoming a U.S. state runs counter to everything Canadians hold dear—from our values of multiculturalism and social justice to the very foundations of our health-care and education systems. It is a dangerous idea that has the potential to unravel the fabric of what makes Canada, Canada.

The notion of Canada becoming a U.S. state is an assault on our identity and sovereignty. Canada, as a nation, is built on a unique set of values and historical experiences that set us apart from our southern neighbour. To suggest that we give up our sovereignty to become part of a larger union with the U.S. is to disregard the very essence of what it means to be Canadian.

No matter where you stand politically, be honest and ask yourself: how does the thought of replacing our flag, our institutions, and our cultural identity with that of another country make you feel?

Canadians must not stand idly by as our rights to self-determination and our economy are threatened. From an economic standpoint, allowing such a takeover by the U.S. would be disastrous for Canada and all working and middle class Canadians. Some proponents of this idea argue that it would grant Canada access to greater resources and markets, but the reality is that as the big fish in the pond, the U.S. will take far, far more from Canada than it will give. Furthermore, Canada's economy, while deeply interconnected with the U.S. through trade and commerce, operates under a distinctly different set of principles and priorities than the United States.

Acknowledging Trump's poor record on the environment and his denial of the climate crisis, Canada's focus on resource sustainability and environmental protection would also be jeopardized by the Americans' policies that disregard ecological consequences, and prioritize deregulation and the exploitation of natural resources. Although far from perfect, Canada, on the other hand, has managed to build a more balanced approach to protecting the environment that includes green technologies and sustainable development. Integrating Canada's economy into a system that consistently places short-term profits over long-term sustainability will be a gigantic leap backwards. Inevitably, if the Americans claim Canada, our middle class here will suffer under American policies that benefit larger corporations at the expense of workers, consumers, and in turn our precious public health-care and education systems.

Trump's threat to make Canada the 51st state is not just an impractical joke by a childish, greed-crazed bully—it is an insult to our intelligence and everything that makes us uniquely Canadian. It is an attack on our sovereignty, our economy, and our social services, that degrades, and if followed through with obliterates our national identity. For generations, our ancestors in Canada have worked long and hard to build a society that is inclusive, egalitarian, and sustainable. To abandon that in favour of joining a country whose priorities often run counter to our own would be a grave mistake. Canada's future lies in maintaining its independence, not in becoming an extension of another nation that currently finds itself in a downward spiral.

Maybe I'm wrong and this gang of American oligarch/wannabe dictators pushing to make Canada the 51st state will do everything in their "power" to ensure that the majority of working class people in both countries will have access to the best health-care, education, housing, food, water, and environment, no matter how much money they have in their wallets. However, given their record of assigning more value to personal greed than they do to the public's basic needs in the U.S., I highly doubt it would change if they took over Canada.