



5 Minutes can change your life

By Tom Reimer

Sly wasn't the type to quit. Failure annoyed him, but it also energized him. Standing in the shadows behind your house, he glared at the back patio door as if sheer determination might make it surrender. It didn't. The reinforced frame, the multi-point locking system, the shatter-resistant glass—every inch of it mocked him. He pressed his palm against the surface, feeling nothing but cold, immovable strength. No give. No weakness. No chance.

Fine. He shifted to the basement window, hoping for a miracle. But the moment he crouched down, he saw the same problem he'd faced last week: the interior window guard, bolted deep into the masonry, unmoving and absolute. He tapped the glass lightly. Dull. Dead. Security film. He hated that sound. It meant you'd thought ahead. It meant he wasn't getting in.

He exhaled sharply, annoyed but not defeated. "You're thorough," he muttered. "I'll give you that."

Sly straightened up and scanned the house again. The first floor was a fortress. Every door reinforced. Every window guarded. Every angle covered by cameras or motion lights. You'd built layers of protection, and he'd run into every one of them.

But there was still the second floor.

He tilted his head back, studying it carefully. Two windows facing the yard. One above the patio, one near the corner. Higher, harder to reach, but maybe—just maybe—less fortified. People rarely secured their second floor as tightly as the first. They assumed height was protection enough. Sly knew better. Height was just an inconvenience.

He circled to the side of the house, moving quietly, eyes scanning for anything he could use. A trellis? No. Too flimsy. A drainpipe? Possibly. It ran straight up the wall, bolted every few feet. Old, but not ancient. He tested it with a tug. Solid. He smirked. "Finally."

He climbed slowly, carefully, distributing his weight, listening for creaks or shifts. The pipe held. He reached the midpoint, paused, then continued until he was level with the second-floor window. He hooked a foot against the siding, steadied himself, and examined the frame.

No security film. No bars. No visible sensors.

His pulse quickened. This was it. His chance.

He pulled a small tool from his pocket and slid it between the sash and frame. The lock inside clicked faintly. He grinned. "Got you."

But when he tried to lift the window, it didn't budge.

He frowned and tried again. Nothing.

He shifted his grip, braced himself, and pulled harder.

Still nothing.

Then he saw it—barely visible in the moonlight. A secondary lock. A small interior latch drilled directly into the frame. Manual. Simple. Brilliant. You'd secured the second floor too. Sly hung there, suspended against the wall, staring at the stubborn window. He felt the same frustration he'd felt at the patio door, the basement window, the entire house. You'd anticipated him again. He sighed, defeated but grudgingly impressed. "Not on my watch, Sly," he whispered, imagining your voice saying it.

He climbed down slowly, retreating into the night, already wondering if next week anyone else would dare try the second floor—or if your fortress would turn them away just as easily.

What if Canada took Trump's 51st-state talk seriously?

By Perry Kinkaide —

The President of the United States keeps suggesting Canada should become the 51st state. Perhaps he thinks Canadians will be flattered. Perhaps he thinks we will be intimidated. Or perhaps it is simply another negotiating tactic from a country with more than eight times our population and vastly greater economic and military power. Whatever the reason, let's take him seriously. But Canada will not arrive in Washington as a distressed property looking for a buyer. We bring almost 10 million square kilometres of territory, more than 41 million people, vast energy reserves, critical minerals, freshwater, agricultural capacity, Arctic sovereignty and access to three oceans. Surely that is worth more than an invitation to become the 51st state. Canada is too large and diverse to become a single state. Our opening position would be the admission of the 10 provinces and Yukon as 11 states: Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Yukon.

Nunavut and the Northwest Territories would initially enter as territories, with their existing rights protected and the option of pursuing statehood later.

Each Canadian state would receive two senators. The 11 states would therefore send 22 senators to Washington, expanding the United States Senate from 100 to 122 members. The President might wish to consider what 22 new senators could mean before continuing to issue the invitation. Representation in the House must be proportional to population. Canada has approximately 41.4 million people, compared with about 342.8 million in the United States. At approximately the same population per congressional district, the Canadian states would receive about 53 voting members in the House of Representatives.

The House would expand from 435 to approximately 488 seats. Canada's delegation would be larger than that of almost every existing state. Combined with our 22 senators, the Canadian states would receive approximately 75 Electoral College votes. That is more than California currently has. Presidential candidates would need to campaign in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton, Vancouver and Whitehorse. They might have to understand supply management, equalization, universal health care, bilingualism, Indigenous treaties and why Canadians become agitated when Americans call our Arctic "theirs." They might even learn to spell "neighbour" correctly. Some Canadian provinces are geographically larger than several American states combined and contain regions with very different interests. Each province must therefore retain the right to divide democratically into two or more states before admission.

Northern Ontario might prefer representation separate from Toronto. British Columbia might decide that Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland and the Interior should not all be governed as one state. Newfoundland and Labrador might reconsider their constitutional relationship. Quebec and the Prairie provinces would have their own regional questions to resolve.

Every additional state would add another two senators. Consequently, Canada might have more than 11 states and more than 22 senators. That would be a decision for Canadians, not Washington, to make. Still interested, Mr. President? Every person who was a Canadian citizen when the union took effect would receive substantial relief from U.S. federal personal income tax for 10 years. Canadians should not be expected to surrender their country, assume part of America's enormous federal debt and immediately begin paying the full cost of joining the federation. Tax relief would recognize the value of the territory, resources, infrastructure and sovereignty being transferred. It would also compensate Canadians for the disruption caused by replacing their national institutions, currency, regulatory systems, and constitutional order.

The exemption could be complete during the first years and gradually reduced over the remainder of the decade. State and local taxes would still support services within the new Canadian states.

Consider it a signing bonus. Canada would also expect the United States to assume and retire our federal debt. Canada's accumulated federal debt stood at approximately \$1.27 trillion on March 31, 2025. It could not simply be erased because Canadian bonds are contracts held by pension funds, banks, governments and individual investors. The debt would have to be redeemed or refinanced as part of the union agreement.

In return, the United States would receive Canada's federal assets, lands, infrastructure, military installations and Crown interests, together with access to an enormous national endowment of energy, minerals, water, agriculture and Arctic territory.

Provincial and municipal debts could remain with the successor states, subject to separate negotiations. Washington might consider \$1.27 trillion too high a price. Canadians might consider it remarkably low.

Universal healthcare would continue in every Canadian state unless its residents later decided otherwise. The Canada Pension Plan, Quebec Pension Plan, Old Age Security, veterans' benefits and other accrued entitlements would have to be maintained or replaced with benefits of equal or greater value. Canadians would receive full American citizenship automatically, without surrendering benefits they had already earned.

Quebec's language and legal traditions would require constitutional protection. Indigenous peoples would participate as governments and treaty partners. Their rights could not be acquired, transferred or extinguished as part of a deal negotiated exclusively between Ottawa and Washington.

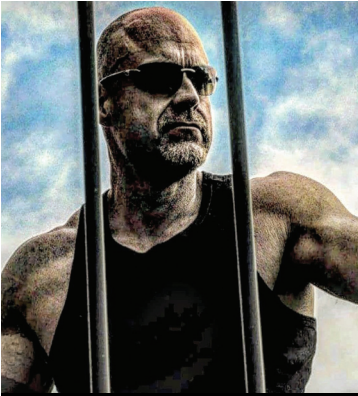
The United States would not merely acquire Canadian land. It would have to assume Canada's constitutional, legal and treaty obligations.

Every province, Yukon and the two remaining territories would vote separately after the complete agreement had been published and independently assessed. No province or territory would be compelled to join because others voted yes. No transfer would occur through executive order, political pressure or a handshake between leaders.

Canadians would decide whether the offer served their interests.

Let us make sure Washington understands the opening terms: •Eleven new states, not one 51st state. •Twenty-two Canadian senators, expanding the Senate to 122 members. • Approximately 53 additional members of the House. •Approximately 75 Electoral College votes. •The right of provinces to divide into additional states. • Territorial status for Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. •Ten years of federal tax relief for existing Canadian citizens. •Retirement of Canada's federal debt. •Protection of health care, pensions, language rights, Indigenous treaties and accrued benefits. •Automatic citizenship and separate democratic approval in every participating jurisdiction.

Canada may have a fraction of America's population, but we have more land, more freshwater, more Arctic territory and perhaps a little more experience living beside a noisy neighbour. So, yes, Mr. President, let's negotiate. But before you ask whether Canada is ready to become part of the United States, you may wish to ask whether the United States is ready for Canada.



Karmageddon

MR. X: WHEN DID MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS BECOME A TEAM SPORT

By Mr. 'X' ~ John Mutton, Former Mayor of Clarington

CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

There is something very strange happening in Clarington's municipal election, and I think residents should be paying attention to it. When I was Mayor, there was an unwritten rule of municipal politics that I always thought made a great deal of sense: you stayed out of everybody else's election. You might privately hope that certain councillors were re-elected. You might have developed good working relationships with them. You might even consider some of them friends.

But their election belonged to them and, more importantly, it belonged to the voters in their ward. You didn't need to be standing beside them at the doors. You didn't need to campaign as a team. You didn't need to tell residents that electing you meant they should elect your preferred councillors too. Why? Because after election day, you might have to work with whoever the public chose. That is democracy.

Yet in Clarington today, we appear to be watching something quite different. Mayor Adrian Foster and a number of incumbent members of Council - with Councillor Corinna Traill notably outside that group - are openly supporting and campaigning alongside one another in a way that increasingly resembles a slate. And I think that raises an important question: When did municipal government become a team sport?

YOUR COUNCILLOR SHOULD REPRESENT YOU - NOT THE MAYOR Municipal councillors aren't elected to represent the Mayor. They aren't elected to represent a political party. And they shouldn't be elected because they are part of somebody else's team. A ward councillor has one fundamental political responsibility: represent the people who elected them.

Sometimes that means agreeing with the Mayor.

Sometimes it means disagreeing with the Mayor.

Sometimes it means being the only person at the Council table willing to say, "No."

That independence is not a weakness in municipal government. It is one of its greatest strengths.

So when incumbents begin campaigning together, endorsing one another, appearing together and effectively asking residents to return the team, voters are entitled to ask what exactly they are being asked to elect. Seven independent representatives? Or a voting bloc?

WE DON'T NEED POLITICAL PARTIES WITHOUT THE PARTY NAMES

I have written before about why I strongly oppose bringing partisan politics into municipal government. Municipal government works differently from Queen's Park and Parliament. There is no government side of the chamber and opposition side. There shouldn't be a party whip telling councillors how to vote. Each member is individually accountable to the people who elected them.

That is precisely why the development of informal slates should concern us. You don't need to print a party name on the ballot to begin creating party-style politics. If candidates campaign together, endorse one another, promote one another and ask voters to elect the group, we are already moving toward the mentality of "our team versus their team." And that is exactly the wrong direction for municipal democracy.

LET EVERY CANDIDATE EARN THEIR OWN VOTE If an incumbent councillor has done an outstanding job, they shouldn't need the Mayor standing beside them to get re-elected. Let them knock on the doors. Let them defend their record. Let them explain their votes. Let them tell residents what they accomplished during the last term and what they intend to accomplish during the next one. And then let the residents of that ward decide. The same applies to the Mayor.

Run on your own record. Tell residents what you accomplished. Explain what you didn't accomplish. Defend the tax increases, spending decisions, development decisions and policies adopted during your term. Then ask the public for another mandate. That's how municipal elections should work.

AND WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE ELECTION?

There is another reason I always believed elected officials should be careful about interfering in one another's campaigns. You don't know who you're going to have to work with after election day. Suppose a Mayor openly campaigns against a challenger to an incumbent councillor. Then the challenger wins. Congratulations. You now have four years to work together. Municipal government requires cooperation between people who frequently disagree.

Poisoning those relationships during an election for the sake of protecting an incumbent colleague may be politically convenient in September, but it can make governing considerably more difficult afterward. That's why the old approach made sense: Run your race. Let them run theirs. And respect the voters' decision.

INDEPENDENCE MATTERS This isn't about whether politicians are allowed to have friends. Of course they are. It isn't about whether one candidate is legally permitted to endorse another. It is about something much more fundamental: What kind of municipal government do we want? I want councillors who can look a Mayor in the eye and say no. I want councillors who don't owe their election to somebody else's political machine. I want councillors whose first question is not, "What does the team want?" It should be: "What do the people I represent need?"

Clarington residents should examine every candidate individually - incumbent or challenger. Look at their record. Look at their ideas. Look at their attendance. Look at how they voted. Look at whether your taxes went up or down. And most importantly, decide whether that individual deserves your vote.

Municipal democracy works best when we elect independent representatives - not slates, factions or unofficial political parties.

Because the moment municipal elections become about electing the team, we have taken another step toward the partisan municipal politics that Ontario has wisely avoided for generations. And once that door is opened, it may be very difficult to close.