

# OPINION & EDITORIALS



## The CENTRAL NEWSPAPER

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### PICKING FIGHTS WITH TRUMP COULD LEAVE CANADA IN THE DARK

by Joseph Quesnel Ottawa has been pushing to diversify trade from United States markets, but geography trumps policy when it comes to electricity. Our power grids intertwine so deeply that this is no ordinary trade relationship. They keep the lights on in both our countries. Electricity has dodged tariff bullets so far, but three longstanding trade irritants could explode if tensions escalate. Americans maintain longstanding complaints about subsidized provincial utility rates, claim limited access to Canadian markets while we sell into theirs, and cross-border transmission projects bog down in red tape. Several provinces depend on U.S. imports. New Brunswick leads, followed by P.E.I., Nova Scotia and Ontario. They need American power for peak demand and maintenance backup. Cross-border electricity imports provide grid balancing, cheaper energy access, emergency backup and seasonal optimization. Losing imports means compromised reliability, pricier domestic generation, reduced industrial competitiveness and higher consumer energy costs.

Canada exports billions in electricity to the United States while importing power for reliability. Trade disputes could disrupt both. Canada's power grid isn't self-contained. It depends on the United States more than most people realize. The export stakes run higher. According to Natural Resources Canada, electricity exports to the U.S. generate several billion dollars annually, with Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia accounting for most of that trade. American restrictions could wipe out billions in revenue, seriously affecting provincial budgets that rely on energy exports.

But the Trump administration has already shown it is willing to accept domestic economic costs when imposing tariffs on trading partners, so electricity may not stay protected forever. Grid reliability concerns may not stop retaliation if tensions escalate. The current B.C. government should exercise double caution given its anti-American rhetoric. B.C. risks losing significant electricity trade if provincial politicians make intertemperate remarks. Those risks are magnified by how Canada now generates much of its electricity. Canada's abundant hydroelectric resources create what are often described as "low emissions" electricity advantages, but concentrating relationships around hydro also increases exposure when cross-border electricity trade becomes politically vulnerable. Over the past decade or so, Canadian policy has shifted from hydrocarbons for electricity generation, increasing reliance on weather-dependent sources. Hydro proves more predictable and secure than wind or solar but still depends on weather and water levels. Quebec and B.C. have experienced droughts that reduce hydroelectric output and limit exports in the recent past, demonstrating how domestic conditions can affect cross-border electricity flows. We have decommissioned reliable fossil fuel power plants that can be turned on when needed, reducing flexibility while increasing weather dependence. Combined with potential trade disruptions arising from political disputes, this loss of flexibility increases Canadian energy security risks. Because Canada's grid is deeply integrated with the U.S. and our domestic flexibility has narrowed, Ottawa must manage this relationship carefully. It should engage proactively with U.S. counterparts, emphasizing mutual benefits such as grid stability, lower costs for American consumers and system reliability. Work with provinces developing contingency plans for disruptions. Identify key vulnerabilities, map alternative sources and invest in grid flexibility capable of handling sudden cross-border flow changes. We need more dependable natural gas and, yes, coal-generated electricity on our grids. More provinces should adopt nuclear power, especially more easily deployed small modular reactors (SMRs). The path requires diplomatic finesse combined with practical planning. Canada should continue emphasizing the mutual benefits of electricity trade while preparing for potential disruptions. Shared power grids bring real reliability and economic benefits, but they also require careful diplomacy. When lights go out, nobody cares about positioning or diplomatic "victories." They want power restored. Canadian policymakers must keep this reality front and centre when dealing with our unpredictable neighbour. Smart policy means long-term thinking with short-term disruption preparation. We have excellent resources and geographic advantages, but we need leaders with political wisdom to protect them. We can start by recognizing that some relationships prove too important to risk over diplomatic point-scoring.

### CANADA IS GAMBLING WITH ITS U.S. ALLIANCE. IT WON'T END WELL

by Scott McGregor

There is a comforting idea making the rounds in Canada: stay neutral, keep everyone calm, and we will be fine. We can distance ourselves from the United States without losing the benefits of the alliance and let markets and multilateral forums do the heavy lifting. It sounds smart. It is also risky.

Two ideas sit at the centre of this argument, and both need plain language. Grey zone pressure is coercion that stays below open conflict, like constant shoving in a crowded hallway. No single push starts a fight, but the pattern shapes how people move, what they say, and what they accept. States and their proxies use grey zone methods because they are deniable and cheap. They include illicit finance, influence campaigns, cyber intrusions, regulatory gaming, diaspora intimidation and targeted trade pressure. Canada softening its stance toward China risks its U.S. security partnership, weakening intelligence sharing, trade access and market confidence. Undermining our alliance with the U.S. will ultimately damage our economic growth and national security. Credibility hedging is the belief that Canada can look reliable to everyone while committing fully to no one. The hope is that reputation, legal language and market confidence will discourage retaliation if Canada drifts between camps. In practice, hedging often reads as hesitation. This matters because Canada is not in a routine trade dispute. Canada sits inside a tightening contest between a U.S.-led security and economic system and a set of revisionist powers that test seams in allied networks, then exploit the friction they create. These actors do not need a conventional fight. They need ambiguity, delay and division. In that environment, credibility is not a free-floating asset. It attaches to behaviour. Allies measure reliability by what Canada enforces, what it resists and what it accepts in cost. They do not measure it by how carefully Canada explains itself. Canada's security and prosperity rest on practical trust with the United States. That trust powers intelligence sharing, Norad, law enforcement co-operation, technology access and capital flows. Most of that machinery runs quietly in the background. Canadians notice it only when it slows down. Here is what quiet erosion can look like. If intelligence sharing slows or becomes more restricted, Canada gets less warning time. That can mean later alerts on foreign interference activity. It can mean fewer leads on transnational criminal finance moving through banks, real estate and trade. It can mean reduced insight into cyber threats that hit hospitals, energy systems and public services. None of this requires a dramatic break. A few more caveats and delays can compound quickly. If Washington questions Canadian enforcement on sanctions, export controls and beneficial ownership, Canadian firms can face heavier screening. Border frictions rise. Compliance costs rise. Investment decisions shift. Supply chains reroute. Ordinary Canadians feel that through higher prices, fewer opportunities and more vulnerability to disruption. That is why the timing of any China softening matters. If Ottawa relaxes China-facing measures while North America approaches another hard round of trade and security bargaining, the signal will not land as nuance. It will land as hedging. In a security-first environment, intent does not rescue perception. Some argue Europe can offset any cooling in U.S. confidence. Europe matters, but it cannot replace North America. The European Union is not a continental security guarantor for Canada. Europe does not backstop our air defence. Europe does not provide the same day-to-day intelligence depth on threats in our neighbourhood. Europe is also consumed by its own near-abroad pressures and resource constraints. Sympathy is not protection. Others argue Canada can lean into middle power coalitions. Coalition building helps. It does not substitute for the anchor relationship that secures Canada's geography, technology access and economic base. Canada influences outcomes through integration and trust, not by bluffing about strategic room that does not exist. Markets will not save this strategy either. Markets punish uncertainty. They do not reward clever ambiguity from a country that depends on external capital, stable trade and predictable security arrangements. If investors start pricing Canada as a higher-risk partner inside a contested system, Canada pays first. Canada pays through borrowing costs, weaker investment appetite and slower growth. None of this calls for subservience. It calls for realism. Canada should treat credibility as something it builds over time, not a slogan. Canada builds credibility by tightening up rules at home and being clear about its alliances. That starts with real enforcement against money laundering and sanctions dodging. It also means showing who truly owns companies and property, so bad actors cannot hide behind shell firms. And it means fixing the weak spots in our system that foreign actors and criminal networks keep exploiting. A good alliance is like a safety net. You maintain it before you fall. You do not test it by stepping away and hoping your reputation will keep it tight. Canada's best strategic advantage has always been simple. Canada is predictable, reliable and aligned. In a world of grey zone coercion, that reliability is not a weakness. It is the shield.

## Letters To The Editor:

WHAT IS ON YOUR MIND? Send letters to newspaper@ocentral.com

Dear Editor:

What does a government do when its corruption is exposed? If you're the Ontario PCs, you change the law so the public can't see any more evidence. The Ford government has announced plans to strip the public of access to documents held by Doug Ford and his ministers' offices — records that would otherwise be accessible under Ontario's freedom-of-information laws. But it doesn't stop there. The legislation will reportedly be applied retroactively, meaning it will likely hide documents tied to the PCs' "Skills Development" slush fund. When politicians are caught in financial scandals, they should answer to the taxpayers. The Ontario PCs' solution is to hide the records and rewrite the rules. That is the kind of behaviour Ontarians have come to expect from Liberals. At this point, the Ontario PC Party is nothing more than an extension of the federal Liberal Party of Canada: Growing government, rewarding insiders, and shutting out the citizens who pay their salaries when they get caught. If Doug Ford and the Ontario PCs have nothing to hide, then they shouldn't be trying to hide it. It's time to stand on principle and stand up for you! Together, we will challenge the left, balance the narrative, and change the course.

Belinda Karahalios

Dear Editor:

The Federation of Canadian Secondary Students / Fédération des élèves du secondaire au Canada (FCSS-FESC) calls upon the Ontario Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security to reverse the recently announced changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), which will see a drastic reduction in non-repayable grants available to post-secondary students starting in the Fall of 2026.

The recent decision to cap grants at 25% of a student's total aid package, shifting at least 75% of financial assistance into repayable loans, creates serious financial barriers for secondary students currently planning their transitions to post-secondary education. These changes come at a time when students are already facing rising costs, including the end of the seven-year domestic tuition freeze. FCSS-FESC believes that access to education should not be determined by a student's financial background. These cuts disproportionately impact low-income and first-generation students, who may now feel increased uncertainty about pursuing higher education. We urge the Ministry to reconsider these changes and to engage in meaningful consultation with student-led organizations to ensure that post-secondary education in Ontario remains accessible and equitable. Founded in 2012, the Federation of Canadian Secondary Students / Fédération des élèves du secondaire au Canada (FCSS-FESC) is an entirely non-partisan youth-led charity that strives to advocate for students in secondary schools and CÉGEPs across Canada.

Maya Chen

Dear Editor:

Last night, Whitby Council took an important step by approving a motion calling on the province to fix Ontario's broken provincial-municipal funding system. Across Ontario, municipalities are being forced to use property taxes to cover billions of dollars in provincial responsibilities. This outdated system is putting immense strain on municipal budgets — including here in Whitby — and making it increasingly difficult to deliver the services residents rely on while keeping property taxes affordable. Whitby is doing its part. We're working to find efficiencies through a core services review that is currently underway. The 2026 Budget included \$2 million in reductions across departments, no new hires and the introduction of new revenue sources. With the provincial budget expected to be released later this month, it's critical that we advocate strongly for Whitby's priorities and for a modern funding framework that reflects the realities municipalities face today. The motion endorsed by Council calls on the province to address the \$4 billion annual shortfall caused by municipalities funding provincial responsibilities through property taxes, and the \$1.5 billion burden of social housing costs placed on municipalities. It also asks the province to re-evaluate the requirement for municipalities to contribute 10 per cent of hospital capital costs, share housing-related revenues like Land Transfer Tax and HST with municipalities, and create a predictable municipal revenue stream tied to housing growth. These are practical, common-sense solutions that would help protect property taxpayers and ensuring municipalities have the resources they need to support growing communities. Mayor Roy's

Dear Editor:

I went to your office on Tuesday, January 27, 2026 to discuss the proposed legislation and requesting your assistance to ensure that my views along with those who share them are presented to parliament. Since you were in Ottawa your lovely receptionist Susan gave me your card and advise me how to proceed with my view of Bill C 218. I must say right up front, when I read the preambles I was mortified as it blatantly states in black and white, confirming my view that "HUMAN RIGHTS IN CANADA" has completely eroded. Politicians, lobbyists (who are not elected officials), religious leaders and activists are now ruling the government. Previously I presented a submission to the Joint Special Committee on Medical Assistance and Dying. I had 3 main objectives: 1. Preplan your end of life while healthy 2. Education - 3 subjects that should be integrated into all medical teaching institutions. A doctors religious views should not be part of this equation. - Last Phase of Life (which begins when medical professionals have no further treatment to offer to enhance quality of life to END OF life. This could be 10 days to 10 years, plus. End of Life should be 2 separate subjects) - Palliative Care - Medical Assistance on Dying (MAiD) 3. Parliament to initiate a Federal Provincial Committee to develop a criteria for MAiD in a format similar to a Personal Will. This then could be completed at the same time. I do object to every cent that has been spent on Bill C 218 as Quebec currently has a functional framework in place and they are a province within Canada. At the moment, there isn't sufficient funds to support the health care system for those people who is in need of it for their quality of life and want to live. I personally experienced this 3 days ago, I had to pay \$150 for a medical appointment because all the OHIP appointments were fully booked. Mental illness in any form should not be a factor on how an individual wishes to end their life. Here are question to those who opposes an individual living with a mental illness/disease rights to die: - Have you ever suffered with a mental illness/disease? - Have you ever lived with a person with mental illness/disease? - Do you know any family living with a mental illness/disease and observe their quality of life? Please keep in mind your age as recent generations are dreamers, with lots of bright ideas, but may be living in a fantasy world and not real life. Why doesn't the government accept the framework for Medical Assistance in dying in Quebec? If this framework was in place across all provinces in Canada, there wouldn't be hostility increasing as Preplanning would eliminate it. In closing: I am an 87+ year old female who has witness many years of politicians. Recently, the credibility of working together has been left behind. If they could properly debate and negotiate issues with respect to each others views a consensus may be achieved. They are all adults and if they acted like one they could come together to run the country efficiently. In my opinion, Parliament today, is like a big sand box full of kids fighting for ownership of the toys. I find the skills of respect (politicians today don't respect themselves never mind anyone else), debate, negotiate, and consensus are a lost art. There is an old saying " the inmates are running the Asylum", which means the people who should be in charge has lost control and the inmates are making decisions that will lead to chaos. Jamil, I would love to have the opportunity to be on a panel or group discussion on this issue.

Audrey Baylis