



A Weekly Column by Dean Hickey

THE FINAL TAKE

AN UNVARNISHED LOOK AT THE MANY
SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES OF OUR TIME...



A 'REALITY CHECK' IN RESPONSE TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT DAVOS

OUR PRIME MINISTER DELIVERED A SPEECH at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, entitled "Principled and Pragmatic: Canada's Path" which centered upon what he called the "rupture" of our post-Cold War international order. The speech included a declaration that the traditional U.S.-led, rules-based international system is over, and "not coming back" and it urged middle powers like Canada, Australia, and Mexico, to form issues-based coalitions.

One of his main tenets was that countries should build "strength at home" and diversify their partnerships to avoid being subordinated by larger powers. While he did not name U.S. President Donald Trump directly, his speech was widely interpreted as a response to aggressive U.S. trade wars and threats to acquire Greenland.

He received a rare standing ovation at Davos but sparked a major diplomatic rift. President Trump subsequently revoked his invitation for our Prime Minister to participate on the Board of Peace, an international organization established by the U.S. President to promote global peacekeeping. This was a major blow to the standing of our country on the international stage, and one that rests with the Prime Minister himself.

The leader of Canada's Official Opposition, Pierre Poilievre, released a statement – a sort of 'reality check' in response to the Davos speech – and below are the main points included in that statement.

What stood out probably the most was when our Prime Minister pointed out "the gaps between rhetoric and reality." That is especially true here at home. If Liberal words and good intentions were tradeable commodities, Canada would already be the richest nation on earth. Unfortunately, after a decade of promises and grand speeches, Liberals have made our economy more costly and dependent than ever before. In the last 12 months, things have only gotten worse in Canada: the deficit has doubled, food inflation is double that in the U.S., housing costs are the worst in the G7, and no pipelines for our natural resources have been approved. The military has massive recruiting and equipment shortfalls, and there is still no free trade between provinces, no crime laws passed, and the Prime Minister's signature promise of negotiating a "win" with the U.S. is unfulfilled.

These unkept promises – which all followed grand speeches and announcements – make us especially vulnerable to the world's dangers. The last five years have shown we can't count on others. Our closest neighbour and largest trading partner, the United States, struck us with tariffs and questioned our sovereignty, however, we can't control what they do.

It's tempting to say our relationship with America is over forever, but here is the reality: We still live next door to the biggest economy and military the world has ever seen. We sell 20 times more to the U.S. than to China. One in 10 Canadian jobs rely directly and indirectly on trade with America. We must remember that our trade and security partnership with the United States is centuries-old and will outlast a single President.

All the same, as we hope for the best, it would be naive to assume that things will go back to exactly the way they were, as tariffs may be here to stay for the foreseeable future. None of that is an excuse for letting our guard down and repeating past mistakes by leaving Canada vulnerable to aggressive powers like China, which the Prime Minister himself called our "greatest threat" only months ago. My, how things have changed.

It was with irony that the Prime Minister quoted Vaclav Havel, one of the great heroes of the 20th century fight against totalitarian communism, less than a week after launching a 'strategic partnership for a new world order' with the Chinese communist regime – a partnership that includes 'plans to deepen engagement on national security issues at senior levels.' We cannot throw caution to the wind with a regime that kidnaps our citizens, steals our technology, interferes with our elections, and has a history of using trade as a tool of diplomatic warfare against us. If this is what the Prime Minister meant when he told the Davos crowd that he "is calibrating our relationships so their depth reflects our values," then we should seriously question his values - and, frankly, his judgment.

We must focus on expanding our network of trade deals with more like-minded middle-power countries. In fact, we already have free trade deals with most middle powers, after the previous Conservative government negotiated agreements with a record 46 countries. Given that we have these agreements already in place, what stops us from growing our trade with them now is not the trade barriers they impose on us, but the trade barriers we impose on ourselves. Legislation has made it impossible to approve projects or ship energy off our coasts. It takes 19 years to approve a mine. The Liberals created these laws and obstacles, and almost a year after taking office, the Prime Minister hasn't removed a single law or bureaucracy, or approved a single pipeline.

The Prime Minister told the crowd in Davos that "a country that cannot feed itself, fuel itself, or defend itself has few options." So, why can't we? Just this week, Canada was declared the food inflation capital of the G7. Last year, Canadians who can't feed themselves made a record 2 million visits to food banks every month – more than double the number from just 7 years ago – in a country with almost endless farming potential.

On the issue of Canadian sovereignty, we need a strong national defence. We don't need anyone's permission to have a strong, state-of-the-art military and defend ourselves. But can we even defend ourselves right now? The Prime Minister has talked a big game about building up our armed forces, but after nearly a year in office, he hasn't even begun to deliver. It's just more promises pushed down the road, and smoke and mirror budgets pushed out into the future. We currently have 300 full-time members of the military stationed in the Arctic, in a territory that is larger than most countries. We have the largest coastline in the world, and yet we have a regular naval force of just 8,400 personnel. A sovereign country must be able to defend its people and its territory.

So far, our Prime Minister is lucky to have been judged mostly by his rhetoric and his stated intentions, by the number of his trips and his meetings overseas - because nearly a year into his term, the rhetoric has changed, but reality has not. There is an illusion of purpose, but no results to back it up. We need to do things, not just say them. 'Canada Strong' can no longer be a slogan, nor 'True North Strong and Free' just a motto.

To paraphrase William Ernest Henley, we are the masters of our fate. We are the captains of our souls. It's time we finally take the wheel – and steer Canada forward with purpose and resolve.



THE X Files

By John Mutton
CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

Karmageddon

By Mr. 'X' ~ John Mutton
CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

Cold Enough for You?

Maybe not as cold as the shoulder President Trump is currently giving the Prime Minister following the China meetings and the push toward what many are calling a new world economic order.

Protectionism and economic nationalism are nothing new to President Trump. It's where he cut his teeth politically. Tearing up NAFTA, repatriating auto and manufacturing jobs, and using tariffs as leverage have all been central to his strategy. There's no question these policies have hurt Canada—and Ontario in particular. Here at home, the Ontario Premier has expressed outrage over the federal government's decision to remove tariffs on Chinese EVs, even going so far as to encourage a boycott of Chinese electric vehicles. At the same time, he has followed through on his promise to keep Crown Royal off LCBO shelves. When you look closely, Ontario's actions mirror the very protectionism being criticized south of the border. Keeping Crown Royal off shelves is framed as a protest over the closure of its Ontario plant. Yet the company maintains significant operations—and its head office—in Manitoba and Quebec. You can't parade as "Captain Canada" while selectively protecting only Ontario jobs. That said, I voted for Doug Ford to look after Ontario. That's his lane. Protecting Canada as a whole is the Prime Minister's job.

The deal Mark Carney is attempting to strike with China and other so-called "friendly" EU nations is clearly an effort to counterbalance our reliance on a superpower neighbour that holds most of the cards. Doing business with China—given its ability to manufacture goods at costs Canada simply cannot match—may reduce inflation. But let's not kid ourselves: it will almost certainly come at the expense of domestic employment. We are living through a period of aggressive attacks on globalization. I'm not convinced that's entirely a bad thing, but the consequences will be real. Canadians should brace themselves for changes in the cost of goods, inflation, and employment levels.

What we do need, however, is political discipline. The legislative framework is clear: the Prime Minister speaks for Canada; premiers speak for their provinces. Staying in your lane matters.

As for Ontario, stay tuned for this week's Mr. X Files. I'll be digging into the Ryan Amato emails. Amato, the former Chief of Staff to the Minister of Municipal Affairs during the Greenbelt scandal, has refused to release emails sent through his personal account and is now before the courts.

There are only two reasons not to release those emails: they incriminate him, or they incriminate others—either within government or among developers.

Amato has a decision to make. Honesty has never been a defining trait of his modus operandi, but the very real prospect of jail time—and the reality that he likely wouldn't fare well on the range—may yet be enough to convince him to release the emails.

Because when they do come out, Canadians will finally see who the real criminals in the Greenbelt scandal were.



Lisa Robinson

PICKERING CITY COUNCILLOR

Punishing the Law-Abiding Won't Make Canada Safer

Let's talk about the federal government's so-called gun "buyback," because Canadians deserve honesty — and this policy is anything but honest.

This program does not target criminals. It targets the most law-abiding citizens in the country. People who followed the rules. People who took safety courses.

People who passed background checks. People who registered their firearms. People who did everything the government asked of them.

And now they're being punished for it.

Meanwhile, the people actually committing gun crimes are untouched by this policy. They don't have licenses. They don't register firearms. They don't take safety courses. And they certainly aren't lining up to hand anything over to the government. They are criminals — and this policy does absolutely nothing to stop them. That's why this so-called gun grab is a complete waste of time, a complete waste of money, and a complete distraction from what actually keeps communities safe. If someone commits a violent crime with a firearm, there should be real consequences — not catch-and-release bail, not revolving-door justice, not political theatre. That is where public safety lives. That is where bail reform matters. That is where government should be focused. And this isn't just opinion — it's been stated plainly by police leadership.

Even here in Durham Region, our own police have acknowledged that gun crime entering our community is not being committed by legal gun owners. That fact alone destroys the justification for this policy. So when politicians claim this is about safety, Canadians should understand what they're really being sold: optics, control, and the targeting of the easiest group — not the most dangerous one. Several police services across Ontario have already made their position clear. The Toronto Police Service and the Barrie Police Service have publicly stated that they will not participate in the collection of legally owned firearms, citing resource constraints and the need to focus on real crime, not political programs. That reality makes it even more important for residents to know where their own police services stand.

That is why I have formally written to Durham Regional Police Chief Peter Moreira requesting confirmation on whether DRPS will participate in the federal program, whether police resources will be diverted away from real crime, and whether DRPS has communicated any position to Ottawa. I am currently awaiting a response, and I will share that response publicly when it is received — because transparency matters.

Across Canada, Premiers including Doug Ford and others are now pushing back against this policy, recognizing what Canadians already know: this will not stop crime, and it will not make communities safer.

History also tells us what happens when governments disarm the law-abiding while ignoring criminals. Across countries and across generations, the pattern is the same. Governments disarm those who obey the law first. They promise safety. They promise order. They promise the power will never be abused.

And then power is centralized — and when things go wrong, the people have no protection left. We've seen this story before: in 1930s Germany, the Soviet Union, Mao's China, Cambodia, Venezuela. Different nations. Different leaders. Same outcome.

Canadians should be especially alarmed because we have already seen our own government turn state power on peaceful citizens. During the convoy protests, police were used against ordinary Canadians under the Emergencies Act — and a court later ruled that action unlawful. So don't tell Canadians this could never happen here. It already did.

And once a government crosses a line, it becomes easier to cross the next one — and the next — and the next. History doesn't repeat because people are blind. It repeats because they're told, "This time is different." It never is.