

# Sovereignty Score

A practical framework  
for evaluating policy  
through the lens of  
Canadian sovereignty

Canadian Shield Institute  
for Public Policy



## The Sovereignty Score

Sovereignty is a fairly simple concept, when you boil it right down to the basics.

Sovereignty means we are in control of our destiny as a nation, we are in control of our critical infrastructure and we get to decide for ourselves how we run this country.

**Sovereignty is the ability for Canada to freely make decisions that reflect Canadian values. And in a democratic society, Canadians all need to be able to have some say in the decision-making process.**

Simple enough.

But where it gets complicated is assessing the strength of Canada's sovereignty. Sovereignty isn't a simple binary. Every country on earth is influenced by geographic realities, global markets, advancement of technology, foreign trade relationships, investment deals and other external forces.

What Canadians have begun to realize is that our national sovereignty is remarkably weak, and historically we have been far too complacent in depending on the United States for trade, military protection and global order.

What's more, Canadians are subject to governance by American technology companies that control digital commerce, core information channels, and cloud infrastructure.

What Canada needs is a repeatable, analytical framework to assess policies and programs and determine whether the government's choices are strengthening or degrading our sovereignty.

The Sovereignty Score is inspired by similar policy assessment tools adopted by the OECD, the Competition Bureau of Canada and others. The idea is to identify the key attributes of a public policy, and quickly examine it in a standardized way.

The reality of policymaking will always be more complex and messy than 10 bullet points, but the assessment criteria reflects a constellation of considerations that, taken together, will move Canada into a stronger place to freely govern ourselves in a democratic society. Canada needs to reclaim sovereignty in areas where we've allowed it to degrade, and we need to build sovereign capacity in critical areas like the digital realm which has become the central nervous system of modern life. Each policy decision will help put us on a stronger footing, or it will be a missed opportunity.

The Sovereignty Score is divided into two sections:

- Sovereignty
- Economic Security

In the first section, the framework looks at the various pressure-points that foreign actors can use to undermine Canada's ability to assert sovereign governance:

1. Supply Chain Chokepoints
2. Technology Platforms That Resist Government Regulation
3. Defence and National Security Threats
4. Corporate Market Dominance
5. Extractive Foreign Investment

In the second section, the framework looks at whether the policy shapes the Canadian economy in ways that make it more resilient and prosperous for Canadians.

1. Canadian Ownership of Vital Assets
2. Job Creation
3. Skills Utilization
4. Shared Economic Prosperity
5. Pro-Social Economic Growth

Put simply: We believe Canada will be more sovereign if our policies reduce reliance on unreliable foreign actors and build domestic capacity that allows us to control our own destiny. That type of restructuring of the economy will lead to a secure, resilient and prosperous country for as many Canadians as possible.

Most government policies will not check every box on the Sovereignty Score. We shouldn't expect everything to be a 10/10. A low score doesn't necessarily mean that it's a bad policy, but it does mean that there are missed opportunities to bolster Canadian sovereignty. But by examining policies through our assessment framework, we can determine which policies are most likely to move the needle on the factors that will ultimately strengthen or weaken Canadian sovereignty, and when/how they can be improved to better serve the national interest.

## Sovereignty:

At Shield, we define sovereignty as the ability to freely make decisions that reflect Canadian values.

This can only be achieved if a wide range of economic and social conditions put us in a position to be independent and resilient. This section gauges whether the policy enhances or degrades our ability to exercise Canadian sovereignty.

**1.1 Does the policy reduce dependence on foreign firms or diversify supply and value chains?**

**1.2 Does the policy put Canada in a stronger position to govern technology systems?**

**1.3 Does the policy enhance Canadian national security and industrial capacity?**

**1.4 Does the policy lead to greater competition and broader market participation, and avoid further entrenching monopoly power or market concentration?**

**1.5 Does the policy support the development and growth of Canadian innovation?**

## **Economic Prosperity:**

This section measures how the policy delivers economic growth, and how it shapes the Canadian economy. This is measured through more than just strict economic growth. We are also interested in whether policies enable wealth generation across a wide swath of the economy, whether we are competitive in the 21st century global digital economy, and whether Canada's industries are occupying high-value roles in global supply and value chains.

**2.1 Does the policy lead to the generation of intangible assets or economic value that is primarily retained by Canadian firms or public entities?**

**2.2 Does the policy create, sustain or improve quality jobs in Canada?**

**2.3 Does the policy increase skill utilization or broaden the skill base of Canadians?**

**2.4 Is the policy designed to ensure that economic benefits create shared prosperity?**

**2.5 Does the policy increase affordability and deliver pro-social benefits to Canadians?**

## Appendix A:

### Core Questions: Why They Matter and Evidence for Success

#### Section 1: Sovereignty

*Why it matters:* Policies that lower reliance on external decision-makers reduce exposure to foreign shocks and veto points. Strategic autonomy lets Canada act in its own interests.

*Evidence to look for:* Decision rights in the hands of Canadians, the ability to substitute domestic inputs, and contingency/continuity-of-government provisions.

##### **1.1 Does the policy reduce dependence on foreign firms, or diversify supply and value chains?**

*Why it matters:* Concentrated foreign dependencies create leverage over Canada's economy, digital infrastructure, and policy choices.

*Evidence:* On-ramps for Canadian suppliers, domestic substitution plans, explicit preferencing of Canadian products or materials, strategic partnerships with like minded nations.

##### **1.2 Does the policy put Canada in a stronger position to govern technology systems?**

*Why it matters:* If Canada doesn't own or control the levers (code, models, data), it can't set rules, audit risks, or change providers without penalty.

*Evidence:* Data residency and access rights, audit/override clauses, sovereign cloud options, ability to regulate markets, increases government ability to exercise autonomy over its own data and systems.

##### **1.3 Does the policy enhance Canadian national security and industrial capacity?**

*Why it matters:* Resilient systems depend on secure supply, compatible tech, and avoid single vendor lock-in, which is critical in crises and for allied cooperation.

*Evidence:* Investing in defence, securing strategic industries, governance and control over critical infrastructure and markets.

#### **1.4 Does the policy lead to greater competition and broader market participation, and avoid further entrenching monopoly power or market concentration?**

*Why it matters:* Market power raises prices, suppresses wages and innovation, eventually shapes regulation itself and undermines democratic governance.

*Evidence:* Competitive procurement design, strategic selection of firms, governing dominated markets.

#### **1.5 Does the policy support the development and growth of Canadian innovation?**

*Why it matters:* Public spending that pulls domestic R&D through to deployment builds compounding capabilities (firms, talent, IP) instead of just importing solutions.

*Evidence:* Local authority over decisions, anchor supplier relationships.

## **Section 2: Economic Benefits**

*Why it matters:* Value-add—not just throughout—drives productivity, wages, and fiscal capacity; short-term wins must compound into durable capability and value capture.

*Evidence to look for:* Domestic value-added projections, productivity impacts, spillover multipliers, export sophistication upgrades.

#### **2.1 Does the policy lead to the generation of intangible assets or economic value that is primarily retained by Canadian firms or public entities?**

*Why it matters:* Retaining intangible assets, profit and shareholder value in Canada anchors future growth and bargaining power; losing them exports rent streams and decision-making authority.

*Evidence:* IP assignment clauses, royalty flows, data governance models, profit-repatriation, domestic reinvestment commitments.

#### **2.2 Does the policy create, sustain or improve quality jobs in Canada?**

*Why it matters:* Employment quality and quantity determine inclusive growth and political durability of the policy.

*Evidence:* Net good/high value job creation or retention.

### **2.3 Does the policy increase skill utilization or broaden the skill base of Canadians?**

*Why it matters:* Capability building (training, apprenticeships, upskilling) is the engine of long-run productivity and reduces import-dependence for talent.

*Evidence:* Training hours per worker, certification programs, entrepreneurship rates, partnerships with colleges/universities, credentials recognized across sectors, jobs with higher value capabilities.

### **2.4 Is the policy designed to ensure that economic benefits create shared prosperity?**

*Why it matters:* Broad distribution reduces backlash and lock-in to low-competition equilibria; it strengthens legitimacy and resilience.

*Evidence:* SME participation targets, entrepreneurship and new business creation rates, community benefits agreements, worker ownership/co-ops, regional equity metrics.

### **2.5 Does the policy increase affordability and deliver pro-social benefits to Canadians?**

*Why it matters:* Stakeholder outcomes are the check against regulatory capture; efficiencies must show up in price, quality, or choice.

*Evidence:* Price/quality benchmarks, service-level guarantees, open entry for challengers, rollout timelines and penalties.

## About Shield

Shield is a next-generation policy studio focused on developing Canada's sovereignty and driving economic transformation. We work across infrastructures, industry, and innovation to confront systemic risks, retain economic value, and build the domestic capacity Canada needs to thrive. Our goal is a more prosperous, resilient, and independent future for all Canadians.

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