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# Canadian Values in a Time of (Trade) War

*“You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.” Matthew 24:6*

*“But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.” Matthew 5:39*

**To: The Right Honourable Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada**

The conventional Canadian wisdom in the present trade war with our American cousins is that we should adopt an “elbows up” approach. Unfortunately, we are not playing hockey, and a different strategy may be preferable.

Prime Minister Carney, you have a moment here and now to do the act of a great leader - that absolutely no one is expecting. You will win if you refuse to play by the President’s rules.

When interviewed recently about what makes Canada different, your predecessor stated that, “We are not American.” Clearly, he meant more than consumer preferences. He was referring to values: What we as a nation believe to be important and what defines who we believe ourselves to be. Indeed, we are different.

One example is our contrasting national ideas of what it means to be strong. America believes that its strength is based on being the biggest economically and most powerful militarily. When America is struck, it believes it should strike back magnitudes harder. Canadian strength is different. Our strength is born of resilience. As the Nova Scotian poet Alden Nowlan wrote, “... this is a country where a man can die simply from being caught outside,” and yet we survive and thrive. Our strength is not about what damage we can inflict, but what we are able to endure and overcome. Our national hero is not John Wayne. It is Terry Fox.

To “turn the other cheek” is not a call to weakness or surrender, but a stand that can only come from the rightness of one’s cause and the ability to absorb whatever the other can dish out. This is resilience.

Consider not reacting to the President in a way that he has already anticipated and welcomes. That is: Do not impose countervailing tariffs in response to his threats or executive orders. He wants our over-reaction because it creates a conflict where none existed, and he thrives on conflict.

Rather, consider an approach that is likely to confuse him and defuse this present trade war. Refuse to play the President’s game. Let us play by our own rules, governed by principles in which we collectively believe.

Remind him of the real Canadian values. We believe in free trade. This blessing to the world has created unprecedented economic growth that has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. We will not easily abandon a principle that has done so much good for so many for so long just because our neighbour has forgotten or denies all the good that his country has received.

Canada believes in keeping our word. Canada, Mexico and the United States created a trade deal during the President’s first term in office. He himself described it as, “The best trade deal in the history of trade deals, maybe ever.” Canada will stick to its commitments, even if our trade partner does not.

It will not take long for the world -- and the people of America -- to see the ridiculousness of the President’s persecution of its neighbour that has been its friend, ally, partner and defender for over 200 years. Our refusal to respond in ways that run counter to our core beliefs -- our values -- will be a testament to our courage, integrity, and resilience.

Canada has the opportunity to demonstrate to the nations of the earth that we believe that our prosperity is linked to theirs and that we are open for business. If our defining feature is that we are different than America -- and our leaders are different from theirs -- then this is the time to show these truths to be self-evident by our actions. Strength in not striking back.

If this approach proves to be wrong, then tariffs, the time-tested way to bring economic ruin upon a nation are still available to you, but why not take this one chance to show your country and the world what a real Canadian is?

Wishing you every blessing as you take up your office in this challenging and complex time,

**Brendan T. N. Caldwell**

*President & CEO*