



Trump, Poilievre, and the Federal Election

Some Key Points

The Trump Factor

What are the implications of the Trump presidency for Canada?

1. Trump's attempts to form a strategic alliance with the most reactionary and semi-fascist forces in the world (witness Vance's meeting with the German neo-Nazis) are a danger to Canada. The talk of taking over Panama and Greenland could be bluster, but they need to be taken seriously. This creates a world of greater instability and more possible military encounters...all of which threatens Canadian security.
2. Trump's open promoting of more and more gas and oil production is a threat to human civilization as we know it, and that includes Canada. His denial of climate breakdown is a recipe for collective suicide.
3. Trump's continuous talk of Canada becoming the 51st state should be taken seriously. This is a threat to Canada's sovereignty: our capacity to make our own economic, political and cultural decisions. It is unlikely that we will see a US invasion in the next year or two. But what are behind these musings: he wants Canada to become more and more like Trump's vision of the US; he wants us to increase military spending; he wants us to attack immigrants; he wants us to promote a culture that rewrites history and basically promotes the worldview of the supposed aggrieved white Christian male who has been attacked by wokeness and cancel culture; he wants Canada to cut taxes on the rich; he wants Canada to abandon any attempts to deal with the climate crisis and protect nature; he wants to promote political forces in Canada who are willing to make deals with him. Musk has already "officially" supported Poilievre. What will Trump say about the Canadian election?
4. Trump's imposition of the trade tariffs will hurt the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Canadians. This cannot be taken lightly. Again, this is a tactic to get Canada to make concessions in many areas. We are already spending more on border security and both the Liberals and the Conservatives are agreeing that we should spend 2% of our GDP on defence. There is always a possibility that Trump's economic warfare against Canada could intensify and then all hell will break loose with the Canadian ruling class calling for more and more tax cuts, more restrictions on labour rights, and some no doubt promoting some sort of economic alliance with the US...like Doug Ford with his "Am-Can fortress" fantasy.

The Canadian Response to the Trump Threat

The vast majority of Canadians appear outraged at Trump's talk of annexation. There has been an upsurge in "Canadian pride". Canadian flags are selling like crazy. People are talking of "buying Canadian". Others are cancelling visits to the US. The American national anthem is being booed at hockey games. This Canadian pride is good in that it shows that Canadians will not be cowed by Trump, and implicitly do not support Trump's political and social agenda. However, national pride can be vague and vacuous. It does not really say what type of Canada we want. For example, in recent days some big Canadian corporations are taking out full-page ads in major newspapers, claiming "we are bullish on Canada". What does that mean? Is the Canada we want run by big companies that develop pipelines and want more privatization and less public services?

The Business and Political Class Response to Trump

The Business Council of Canada (BCC) is an organization of the richest corporate executives. A SCAN! member, George Hewison, suggested we look at their website. Their response to Trump is the following:

Canada should become an energy and resource superpower. And how do we do this?

1. Build more oil and gas pipelines
2. Reform the Impact Assessment Act. (which means reduce environmental oversight of energy projects)
3. Go nuclear
4. Earn Indigenous consent
5. Incentivize critical mineral production
6. Address labour disruptions; amend the Canada Labour Code

Most of the above corresponds with a lot of the Trump agenda: deny the climate crisis; turn Canada into hewers of wood for the US; attack unions and workers.

On February 15, Pierre Poilievre gave an hour-long speech to followers at an Ottawa rally. As painful as this will be, it is strongly suggested SCAN! members look at the transcript of this speech which is on the Conservative Party website.

First, almost all of the points of the BCC recommendations are supported by Poilievre.

He is super strident about building more oil and gas East-West pipelines which he claims will allow Canada to be less reliant on the US for transportation of oil and gas. This is climate crisis denial on steroids. "We will save Canada, but we will contribute to destroying the world by climate breakdown."

“We must have the courage and backbone to stare down Liberal eco-fanatics like Guilbeault.” (former Minister of the Environment and Climate Change). Guilbeault is not our model, but I think we should all be proud “eco-fanatics”, for it is this “fanaticism” that might save the world.

Poilievre talks a lot of breaking down interprovincial trade barriers. As an excellent article in the Breach shows, this is mostly smoke and mirrors. There are actually very few interprovincial trade barriers and the biggest barriers are distance and transport costs. But what is really behind this talk are the loosening of regulations on business: environmental protections, food safety inspections, and professional licensing requirements.

Poilievre is all in favour of nuclear power development.

Poilievre forcefully says that he will incentivize Indigenous leaders’ support for oil and gas and mining projects by letting companies pay a share of their federal corporate taxes to local First Nations groups. He also says he will speed up the development of the Ring of Fire projects in Ontario. This area is a carbon bomb and would be an unmitigated climate disaster as well as being blatant disregard of Indigenous sovereignty.

In fact, in his long speech there is not one word about Indigenous rights or sovereignty or of implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Poilievre is also gung-ho for increasing militarization by upping Canada’s contribution to NATO to 2% (it is now about 1.5%) as fast as possible. Also, he talks of setting up the first military base in the Arctic to protect us from the Chinese and the Russians. (Is there not irony in this because it is the US that talks about annexing Canada, not China and Russia) And Poilievre talks of militarizing the Canadian border by sending more aircraft to the border. All of this is code for anti-immigrant propaganda.

Now Poilievre does talk about retaliatory tariffs against the US, and most Canadians would probably support this. However, he is quick to point out that “not one penny” of the money the government gets from these tariffs will go to government spending. There is no mention of concrete support for workers who might lose their jobs and income. And the implication is that there will be cuts to public services. And there will be no capital gains tax...the rich need all the help they can get!

What is striking about Poilievre’s speech is his strident fervor to promote the Trump “anti-woke” agenda. While he does not openly attack DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), let us not mince words. This is code for restoring racism, homophobia, trans-phobia, and anti-immigrant propaganda to be the official “national” narrative of Canada. Here are some choice phrases:

“Our military will be guided by a warrior culture, not a woke culture”.

“We will end cancel culture and stop the war on our history”.

“We will defeat the insidious and divisive cancel culture that has sought to destroy our national pride, our national monuments, and the legacy of our nation’s first Prime Minister.” And it is this Prime Minister, John A. MacDonald, who brought us the genocidal residential schools and encouraged hatred of Indigenous people.

“Laws will be enforced. We will treat all as Canadian First without hyphens.” Long live the white Christian hetero-sexual male Canadian.

SCAN! and the Federal Election

This Federal election is very important for Canada. If Poilievre was to win, it would greatly reduce Canada’s capacity to resist Trump; it would set back the struggle against the climate crisis; it would create a much more unequal society, and it would threaten the rights and livelihoods of immigrants, Indigenous peoples, racial minorities, and the LGBTQ+ and trans communities.

Therefore, our main focus must be on exposing Poilievre.

However, just raising the Canadian flag is not sufficient. The threats from Trump and Poilievre are not just a danger, but an opportunity. It is an opportunity for us to put forward our vision of what a sustainable, caring, and equitable society should look like. It is also an opportunity to elaborate a climate justice approach to resisting Trump.

Statements from the Council of Canadians (The Pledge for Canada) and the Climate Action Network (CAN-Rac) as well as key sections of SCAN!’s platform can help us promote a clearer vision.

The overarching assertion is that:

“We must unequivocally assert and protect the sovereign right of Canadians to shape their own political, economic, social and cultural destiny...” (The Pledge for Canada)

Also,

1. We support retaliatory tariffs against the US. As well, “export taxes on oil and gas and other Canadian exports that cannot easily be replaced should target US corporate profits, putting pressure on the Trump administration to negotiate their removal.” (CAN-Rac)
2. There needs to be a government-sponsored CERB-like fund that can help workers in those industries that are particularly affected by the tariffs.
3. To help fund this special support for workers, there should be a special tax on excess profits and excess wealth.
4. We must phase out fossil fuel production as fast as possible and make huge investments in renewable energy.
5. We need a “publicly-led green industrial strategy that builds our national electricity grid and clean manufacturing capacity, centering community ownership and projects which

meet the requirements for Indigenous consent and rigorous environmental protection criteria” (CAN-Rac). This will make us less dependent on our trade relationship with the US.

6. Support for Indigenous rights and sovereignty
7. Support for workers in their transition from carbon intensive industries to sustainable jobs by providing free training and income support.
8. We must work with other countries that are threatened by Trump. “We must contribute our fair share to international cooperation for global climate action.” (Pledge for Canada)
9. We must welcome immigrants and protect their rights in Canada