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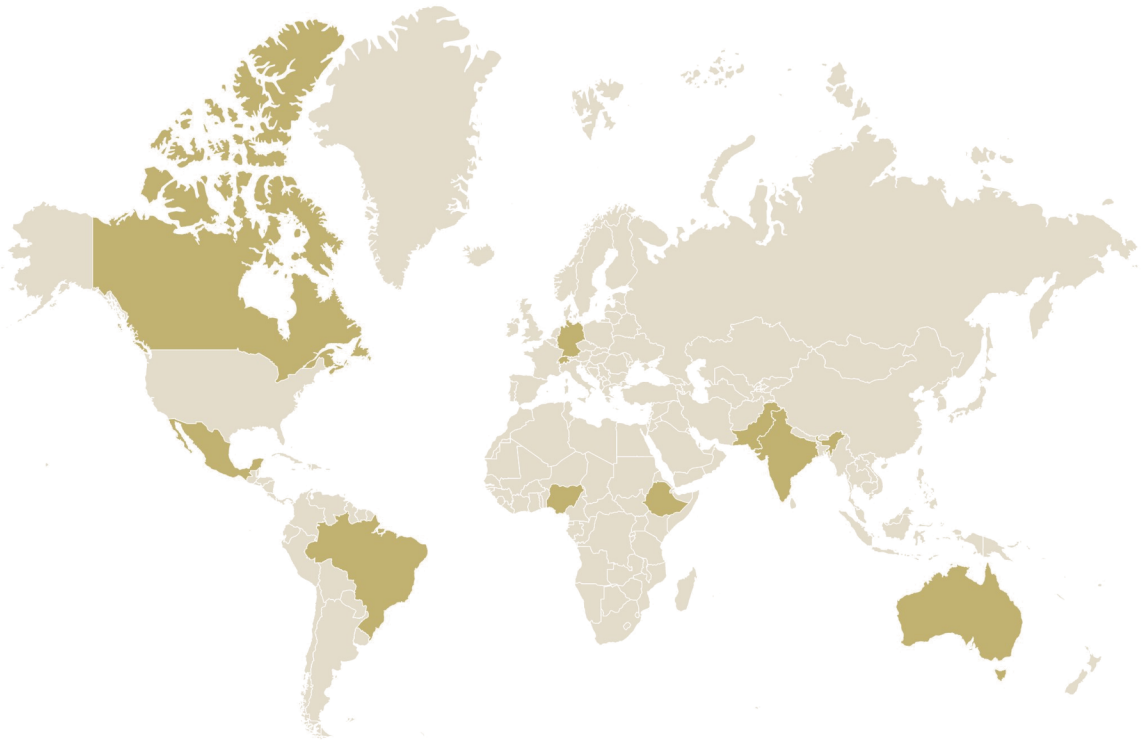
Canada's Sovereignty Moment



JOCELYNE BOURGON · OCTOBER 2026

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1. Canada's Sovereignty Moment

Canada is facing a *sovereignty moment*.

Around the world, geopolitical tensions are rising, economic nationalism is resurgent and the international system that once contributed to stability and growth is under strain.

The return of great-power rivalry, the weaponization of trade, technological competition, cyber insecurity, climate change, demographic pressures, and growing challenges to democratic governance have renewed interest in *sovereignty*. Under threat from outside and pressures from within, the question is especially important for Canada. For many decades, the discourse in Canada about sovereignty has been framed in constitutional terms. This has led to constitutional negotiations, judicial opinions, referendums and debate about secession.

But the concept of sovereignty should take a broader and more consequential meaning. Sovereignty cannot be defined only in legal terms but by the capacity of a state to shape its own trajectory in a complex, turbulent and interdependent world. *Effective sovereignty* is the capacity of a country to set its own course exempt from coercive pressures and the capabilities to mobilize human and financial resources in support.[1]

A country may be sovereign in name but lacking the economic, financial, technological or military means to *act independently* of the influence exercised by more powerful states or by private entities. S*ubordination* in the 21st century may be less visible but is as real as older forms the world experienced before through colonization, satellite states or zones of influence under the hegemony of powerful states. The digital and AI revolution that is concentrating power in a few hands combined with the pressures exercised by dominant countries transforms the concept of sovereignty and the practices that give it expression.

The traditional view of sovereignty focused predominantly on border, defence, military capacity and territory. This remains relevant today. A broader view of sovereignty brings attention to different capabilities: the capacity for Canada to set its own trajectory and to safeguard the levers for a free people to build the future of their choice. To increase its *effective sovereignty*, a country needs collective mobilization, strategic interventions and mutually beneficial partnerships and alliances.

It is particularly important for Canada to reframe the conversation about *sovereignty* and *independence* in terms that reflect the challenges of governing and serving in the 21st century.

From trade negotiations to megaprojects, from defence to procurement, from everyday transactions to major investments, every decision becomes a strategic decision with a clear purpose: will this decision, action or intervention enhance Canada's effective sovereignty now and in the future? Canada needs a

[1] See Corin Tentchoff, *Sovereignty: A Broadening View* (Ottawa, ON: Public Governance International, 2026)

sovereignty strategy to give clarity of purpose to the many strands of actions and decisions needed to navigate through an accelerating period of change.

2. Sovereignty: An Evolving Concept

S*overeignty* used to mean that a state had *authority* within *a territory* to the exclusion of any other state.[2] The 21st century has altered this understanding. Formal authority does not mean much if a state does not have the capacity to use it, if it is constrained to align its domestic policies to serve the interests of dominant agents beyond its borders or if it does not have the capacity to deploy resources to support its priorities. A growing body of literature has started to emerge on the evolving concept of sovereignty, from the late 20th century through today.[3]

Today a country is unlikely to have "exclusive authority" on most matters. A state's capacity to govern is increasingly shaped by forces that transcend its borders. Financial markets respond instantaneously to political events. Supply chains span continents and are vulnerable to choke points. Cyberattacks originate thousands of kilometers away. The control of artificial intelligence, critical minerals, energy systems and digital infrastructure are the subject of fierce competition. Climate change is reshaping the planet and shrinking the habitable surface of the globe.[4]

Sovereignty is not an absolute condition, either possessed or absent. It is a continuum of governing capabilities supported by a web of institutions, systems and interrelationships that build a country's effective sovereignty*;* this is what matters most.

Canada enjoys all the attributes of formal statehood. It is internationally recognized, controls its territory, maintains diplomatic relations, participates in international organizations, and exercises constitutional authority over its domestic affairs. Yet Canada's effective sovereignty requires sustained attention. Canada's effective sovereignty will depend on a combination of critical decisions to ensure its future economic prosperity, secure its digital infrastructure, defend its Arctic territory, preserve social cohesion and ensure the unity of the country.

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[2] *Island of Palmas Case (Netherlands, USA)* (1928), Permanent Court of Arbitration, https://legal.un.org/ riaa/cases/vol_ii/829-871.pdf

[3] Many authors have worked in this space, but highlights of the broadening and complexifying of sovereignty, in these particular lines, include Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye's *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1977); Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999) and Stephen Krasner, "Abiding Sovereignty," *International Political Science Review* 22, no. 3 (2001); and Henry Farrell and Abraham L. Newman, "Weaponized Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion," *International Security* 44, no. 1 (2019)

[4] Also complicating matters is the layering of authority in federal systems; see Rupak Chattopadhyay, "What Is Sovereignty? Canada and the Politics of Shared Authority," *Policy: Canadian Politics and Public Policy*, July 15, 2026, https://www.policymagazine.ca/what-is-sovereignty-canada-and-the-politics-of-shared-authority/

Sovereignty is built over time. It is the result of well performing public institutions able to make decisions, a competent public administration able to get things done, international trust in government. It is in the adaptive capacity of its public institutions and the federation. Above all, it is in Canadians' resolve to build and share a better future together. *Effective sovereignty* cannot be built on a moment's notice; it is irreplicable when it is most needed.

3. Sovereignty is Capacity in Context

Effective sovereignty is contextual. It takes shape in the environment within which governments operate. It depends on the nature of the challenges government are called upon to face. The capacities needed to govern in the 20th century are quite different than the ones needed to govern in the second quarter of the 21st century.

There is a fairly broad consensus at the moment that the world is going through the most profound geopolitical realignment since WWII. Canada's environment has changed more profoundly during the last 25 years than at any time since the late 1950's. The assumptions that shaped government decisions for half a century – a relatively stable international order, expanding globalization, open markets and broadly predictable geopolitical relationships – can no longer be taken for granted.

Strategic competition among major powers is on display. Military conflict has re-emerged in Europe and the Middle East. Indo-Pacific tensions continue to reshape international security. There is a resurgence of economic sanctions, export controls, and investment restrictions as instruments of statecraft. Trade and national security are treated as a single policy domain reinforcing one another. External developments increasingly influence domestic prosperity and national security.

Technology, the development and control of it, has become a determinant of geopolitical influence in new ways. Artificial intelligence, quantum computing, cybersecurity, biotechnology, telecommunications, and advanced manufacturing increasingly shape economic competitiveness and national security alike. Countries that develop critical technologies possess greater autonomy than those that rely entirely upon foreign suppliers. Technological dependence reduces policy autonomy and may give rise to new form of domination. Countries that cannot secure digital infrastructure, protect sensitive information or develop critical technologies become more dependent on the decisions of others beyond their borders.

The world has entered a new phase where national security, economic security and technological leadership are intertwined. Technological sovereignty does not mean self-sufficiency but to safeguard the capacity of a country to protect its interests.

Geography also plays a role in a country's effective sovereignty. Canada is bordered by three oceans and shares a 5,000 kilometers border with the USA. What was once a strategic advantage is becoming a

challenge that could leave Canada more isolated than before. The USA administration has repeatedly voiced intentions hostile to the interests of Canada. It would be a mistake to assume that this is a temporary anomaly. Further to the south, Mexico is better positioned than Canada to benefit from strategic alliances with other Latin-American countries. The European Union currently has more free trade arrangements with Central and South America than with Canada.

In summary, *Canada is exposed* to a convergence of forces that also affects other countries to varying degrees – but it is *more vulnerable* than most to a USA administration that is redefining its role in the world and aspires to assert its authority over the Americas and the western hemisphere. Canada is navigating through an unprecedented period of change while in the midst of a trade war with its most important ally and trade partner. It is in such a context that Canadians enter the second quarter of the 21st century.

Until now, Canadians focused on *sovereignty issues* from a constitutional perspective: jurisdictions, division of power, the notwithstanding clause, referendums and secessions. The question of sovereignty must be reframed from a governance perspective: *what governing system may best serve citizens' interests now and in the future?*

Effective sovereignty is multifaceted. The capacity to act, choose and get things done is at the centre of a sovereignty strategy. Most policies can contribute to building the effective sovereignty of Canada but for the purpose of this paper three dimensions are explored: economic sovereignty, fiscal sovereignty and national unity.

4. Economic Sovereignty

Economic sovereignty is the ability of a country to exercise meaningful control over its economic destiny and to manage its domestic affairs and international relations.

Canada entered the 21st century with optimism. Canada was "cool."[5] It had a balanced budget and by 2007-08 it had reduced its debt to GDP to 29.8%.[6] It generated surplus budgets for eleven years in a row; it had the capacity to invest in the future of its choice. Canada was a leader in digital services; in the 2002 inaugural United Nations index of e-government, it ranked sixth in the world.[7] It had progressively reduced its overreliance on natural resources. By 1999, resources staples accounted for less than 20% of

[5] "Canada's new spirit," *The Economist*, September 2003.

[6] Jocelyne Bourgon, *Program Review: The Government of Canada's experience eliminating the deficit, 1994-99: a Canadian case study* (London, UK: Institute for Government, 2009), 28

[7] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Benchmarking E-government: A Global Perspective.* (New York, NY: United Nations, 2002), 7

total Canadian merchandise exports; the lowest level ever. It was the fourth largest aerospace manufacturer in the world and 4th largest automotive manufacturer and so on.[8]

What a difference 25 years may make! The first quarter of the 21st century has not been kind for Canada. Today, Canada depends on the USA market for more than 70 % of its exports – an improvement over 1999's 86.7%, but still large enough to bring substantial vulnerability.[9] Fifty percent of Canadian exports are based on natural resources, the highest level of dependence on primary exports since the 1960's.[10] The Canadian manufacturing sector shed 600,000 jobs since 2010.[11] There has been a sharp decline of the economic complexity index[12] and economic fitness performance[13] over the last 20 years; the capacity to generate high value products and services other countries would find hard to emulate. The gap in per capita GDP between Canada and the USA has accelerated since 2014, the year of the oil price crash.[14]

This is not an accident, it was not inevitable and it is not irreversible. This is the result of a combination of policy choices by all governments about what was done and what was not done that *taken together* did not prepare Canada for the future. It is the result of collective and individual decisions in the private, public and civic spheres that created vulnerabilities and tolerated an increasing level of dependency. The important point is not to lay blame for past results but to learn how to turn things around in the second quarter of the 21st century through collective effort and concerted actions.

To reduce its economic vulnerability and ensure its effective sovereignty, Canada will need to overcome various forms of *dependence*. This includes:

> *Market dependence*: Breaking free from an overreliance on the USA market that makes Canada vulnerable to coercive actions. This is currently the subject of much discussion.
>
> *Staple dependence*: Reducing Canada's reliance on the export of unprocessed natural resources. Natural resources will always be a source of strength for the Canadian economy. However, a country is better protected by a balanced economy that includes strong manufacturing and

[8] Jim Stanford, "What Kind of Superpower Do We Want to Be?," in Bob Rae (ed.), *Reclaiming Canadian Sovereignty in a Ruptured World* (Halifax, NS: James Lorimer & Company, 2026), 215-16

[9] Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, *Trade Data Online*

[10] Stanford, "What Kind of Superpower," 215-17; this shift caught attention as early as 2005 – see Philip Cross and Ziad Ghanem, "Canada's natural resource exports," *Canadian Economic Observer,* May 2005, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-010-x/00505/7894-eng.htm

[11] Stanford, "What Kind of Superpower," 216

[12] The Growth Lab at Harvard University, "Growth Projections and Complexity Rankings" [Data set] (2026). https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/XTAQMC

[13] Both the World Bank's former Economic Fitness relative ranking and its post-2015 Universal Economic Fitness Metric absolute score.

[14] Grady Munro, Jake Fuss, and Joel Ernes, *Squandering the Canadian Century Part 1: Comparing Economic Performance in Canada and the United States* (Vancouver, BC: Fraser Institute, 2026); on the gap's tie to Canada's focus on natural resources and the 2014 oil price crash, see Charles St-Arnaud, "The Lost Decade(s): or how the oil boom masked Canada's economic mediocrity," *Alberta Central*, 14 April 2025, https://albertacentral.com/intelligence-centre/economic-news/the-lost-decades-or-how-the-oil-boom-masked-canadas-economic-mediocrity/

service sectors. A reliance on imports for goods and services of critical importance makes a country vulnerable to choke points, supply chain risks, etc.

Service provider dependence: A "new digital order" is taking shape around AI, robotics, quantum computer and biotechnology. The risk of dependence is magnified by the concentration of technological powers in the hands of a few firms that control cloud infrastructure, AI models, operating systems and the infrastructure through which intelligence operates.[15] The challenge is to retain sufficient operational control and sovereign capabilities over the systems essential for its economic, institutional and democratic life.

In summary, a country that depends on a single market, a single class of exports or a single provider is putting itself at risk. These risks are compounding each other. In the 21st century subordination is not achieved just through wars but through the erosion of a country's effective sovereignty.

This time requires *collective action*. The Canadian federation has the tools, assets and capabilities to ensure its *economic sovereignty* in the future. There are reasons to doubt that any one province of Canada on its own could resist the pressures leading to greater dependency and subordination.

There is a fairly broad consensus at the moment about Canada's way forward. Canada needs to reduce its dependency on the USA, diversify its exports, improve public and private productivity, open the domestic market and remove the barriers to internal trade. Canada needs to generate products and services the world wants to buy at price the world is prepared to pay, on a scale and at a speed that meets buyer's demand.

Canadian citizens have showed the resolve to face Canada's *sovereignty moment*; this may be difficult to sustain as the cost mounts unless they are joined in a genuine collective effort by the public and private sectors and all governments working together to put Canada on a better trajectory.

The heavy lifting for economic diversification must come from the *private sector*. Governments may open doors and provide support, but individual firms face the challenge of diversifying their markets and/or introducing new products and services. Governments can ease the transition but above all they must accelerate adaptation to a new economic reality and resist the temptation of introducing measures that would delay the inevitable adjustments.

Governments must find new and better ways to work and make decisions together to advance the collective interests of citizens across the country. A coordinated approach is necessary to make Canada a country of choice for investments. This means easy access, streamlined and harmonised legislation, simplified and harmonised taxation, and so much more. Governments have given lip service to reducing

[15] See Don Tapscott, "Digital Sovereignty Is Both National And Personal," in Bob Rae (ed.), *Reclaiming Canadian Sovereignty in a Ruptured World* (Halifax, NS: James Lorimer & Company, 2026), 238

interprovincial barriers to trade for too long. What might have been tolerable at a prior time becomes intolerable and irresponsible when the livelihood of Canadians is at risk.

The public sector needs to show that it is deserving of the trust of Canadians. This is not a time for service breakdowns, intolerable waiting times and poor quality of service. It is legitimate for governments to ask their public sector to contribute to a collective effort to reduce Canada's dependency and build its effective sovereignty by reducing its fiscal footprint and improving service to citizens. New avenues are possible that did not exist before.

Canadians will suffer the brunt of the impact of raising tariffs between Canada and the USA. In the short term, assistance may be provided to mitigate the impact, but the main challenge is to ensure that Canadians will not suffer a deterioration of their standard of living in the future.

A focus on *effective sovereignty* brings clarity of purpose to government's actions and decisions. The Canada-USA trade negotiations provide a good example of the implications. Trade negotiations become sovereignty negotiation when the currency for freer trade is:

- to cede Canada's domestic and foreign policy making space to align with USA policies;
- to agree to a "digital alignment" that subjugates Canada to USA decisions and frameworks;
- to limit Canada's ability to freely enter into trade agreements with other countries; or
- to enter into "economic security commitments" that are sovereignty-limiting precedents for the future.

This is the case for Canada's relations with the USA as well as any other trading partner.

The second quarter of the 21st century may be as close as Canada will ever get to a *war time effort*; a time when the challenges ahead exceed the capacity of governments and require a genuine *collective effort.* Canada's sovereignty moment requires the best the Canadian federation has to offer. Canada has all that is needed to face the moment and overcome the difficulties ahead. The most critical factor of success is *unity*; this, in the end, is in the hands of Canadians.

5. Fiscal Sovereignty

Fiscal sovereignty is more than tabling an annual budget that reconciles the top and the bottom lines. It is more than the authority to collect taxes and accountability for the use of taxpayer's money. The legal authority of governments to collect taxes and spend taxpayers' money is not questioned.

Fiscal sovereignty is *the capacity* for a country to invest in the future of its choice, to set a trajectory, make decisions and mobilize financial resources and capabilities to make them a reality. Fiscal sovereignty

speaks to the *resilience* of a country able to face adversity, absorb shocks and disturbances and *stay the course*.

In a way, fiscal sovereignty is *fiscal capacity imbued with purpose*, where decisions around taxation, financial resource allocation, debt and deficit financing are in service of a greater purpose: that of protecting, preserving and strengthening the capacity of a country to build the future of its choice.[16]

Budgeting in this context is a balancing act to bring together the capacity to generate revenue, manage expenditures and allocate resources to respond to emerging needs and circumstances. It is a process of reallocation to reconcile known pressures arising from factors like aging populations, increasing healthcare costs, modern infrastructure needs, environmental adaptation, and so on with the capacity to generate revenues and to lever domestic and international investments.

Fiscal sovereignty takes shape around a number of dimensions:

> *Resource capacity*: A sovereign country needs a productive economy and a credible fiscal system to generate revenues. Legal sovereignty without the necessary fiscal capacity leads to dependency.
>
> *Freedom to choose*: Governments must be able to make choices and have meaningful room to decide where resources and capabilities will be deployed. The Canadian federation has the added advantage of pooling risks and capabilities to advance the collective interests of citizens.
>
> *The ability to invest in the future:* Fiscal sovereignty goes beyond financing today's government, and it is more than a balanced budget. It is about making long-term investments whose benefits will materialise decades later. This is the meaning of building the capacity for citizens to *invent the future of their choice*.
>
> *Resilience*: Fiscal sovereignty ensures that a country has the bench strength and the deep pockets to absorb crises, disruptions and disturbances of all kinds without bending to choices dictated by others.

Major investments will be needed to reduce Canada's dependence on the USA, ensure its future prosperity and security in a changing economic and geopolitical landscape and protect its social safety net. The Canadian federation has the fiscal capacity, the credibility and the reputable financial institutions necessary to bring about the necessary turn around.

Transparency will play a key role in sustaining a collective effort on the scale that will be necessary. In a democracy, the country belongs to its people. As "owners," citizens must be kept informed of how nation-building investments are funded, the risks associated with key decisions and the overall impact and progress along the way. Transparency is also needed to sustain investors' confidence. They need a

[16] Corin Tentchoff, *Fiscal Sovereignty: Capacity with Purpose* (Ottawa, ON: Public Governance International, 2026)

clear idea of Canada's overall trajectory and how well governments are working together to execute on it. Annual budgets are the main instrument to ensure transparency and sustain citizens' and investors' confidence.

The difficulties ahead are not beyond the capacity of governments working together and the resolve of Canadian citizens to bring about change. This is where *unity* takes central stage by setting in motion the conditions for *collective actions*.

6. Unity

None of the challenges mentioned so far are insurmountable. The most important risk factor for Canada to successfully navigate through an especially challenging period of change is *unity*.

Unity is not the absence of conflict, and it does not require uniformity; in fact it is enriched by diversity. Unity is the capacity of a people to combine their differences, resources, knowledge, knowhow and capabilities to build and share a better future together.[17]

Unity draws strength from the awareness that being together *enables* people to achieve results that far exceed what they could aspire to accomplish separately. Unity exists when people see themselves as members of a *broader community*.

Crises are too important to be wasted. They bring clarity to what was there all along but might have been hard to distinguish under the distorted light projected by 24-7 media coverage that gives prominent place to the most strident voices but submerges the softer voices of people going about their daily lives.

When Canada was exposed to trade, economic, political and psychological warfare by its most important trade partner and ally, *citizens united* to defend Canada's sovereignty. There was an immediate and collective response to resist oppression, and a powerful signal sent to governments to reject concessions that would undermine Canada's future sovereignty. There was a display of collective solidarity for the industrial sectors, regions and people most affected and an expectation that the government of Canada and the provinces will work together to steer Canada through a challenging period of time. There was hope that political parties would tone down the rhetoric and search for common grounds to advance solutions.

The key features of a *united people* were on display: a community sharing a common purpose and able to carry out collective actions.

Citizens from all walks of life reacted as members of a shared community because their wellbeing and future are intertwined. They recognised that Canada was facing a sovereignty moment and responded

[17] A theme underlying the New Synthesis framework; see the *Fieldbook* on a dynamic governing system: Jocelyne Bourgon, *The New Synthesis of Public Administration Fieldbook* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Dansk Psykologisk Forlag, 2021), 63-67

accordingly. Their reaction was immediate. It transcended regions, groups or generations. It rose above differences to advance a common desirable outcome for all.

Unity is a powerful force that enables people to respond *collectively* to overcome adversity, share risks and pool capabilities. It is a driver of effective sovereignty.

And so, the story about *sovereignty* goes full circle. *Unity* builds the willingness to act together; *collective action* builds the capacity to build a better future... and this in turn reinforces sovereignty.

The irony of Canada's situation is that its greatest difficulty is not to surmount the challenges ahead that are driven by a convergence of external forces; it is to overcome *internal* forces that weaken its capacity for *collective actions.*

In the coming years, Canadians will be exposed to referendums about the secession of a province. Whatever the outcomes, referendums are divisive and erode the capacity for collective actions.

Proponents of a province's secession have successfully *normalised* the idea that secession is a "normal" step like many others – a "normal idea" for "normal people." In fact, secession is far from the normal course of events. The "norm," if there is one, is to ensure territorial integrity and the continuity of the state. Governments may change but the state endures.

Secession is not an easy walk in the park; it is the dismantling of an existing constitutional order and a proven system of governance to put in its place a system of government with unproven capabilities. The ongoing possibility of secession has significant implications for Canada. It affects the overall performance of the Canadian federation even in the most favorable circumstances.

Canada's sovereignty moment may provide an opportunity to rediscover that the society citizens have built north of the 49th parallel deserves to be respected, defended and protected against forces that pull it apart.

At the scale of the world, Canada is a remarkable achievement. Canadians have built a modern, democratic, inclusive society governed by *the rule of law*. A country that enjoys *a parliamentary system* of responsible government that provides checks and balances in the exercise of power and gives citizens control over the people they elect. A democratic system of *representative democracy* where the role of elected officials is to deliberate and forge consensus to solve problems and propel society forward.

This is a country that draws strength from *federalism* as a system of governance designed to encourage diversity in the exercise of power and to facilitate collective actions when working together, yielding greater prosperity, security and influence in the world. Federalism expands Canada's *effective sovereignty* by combining local knowledge with national capacity, regional diversity with collective strength, and democratic legitimacy with institutional flexibility. Federalism is not a cross to bear but a strategic advantage for facing the challenges of the twenty-first century. It transforms a geographically vast and

diverse country into a political community capable of acting collectively to advance shared prosperity and collective problem solving.

The Canadian federation, as imperfect as it may be, has withstood the test of time and resisted the negative impact of some of the forces that are undermining the functioning of modern democratic states in the 21st century. Most notably, these include the power of money used to undermine the voting power of citizens, elected officials using the levers of the state for their own advantage, governments using elections for some degree of legitimacy and then using the levers of the state to undo democratic institutions from within, and extreme nationalism that promotes segregation, discrimination and the elimination of equal rights of citizens of under the law.

Governing is never easy at the best of times, and the second quarter of the 21st century is shaping up to be especially challenging for modern democratic countries like Canada.

In the end, *Canada's sovereignty moment* may be an opportunity for citizens to rediscover that the society they have built north of the 49th parallel deserves to be celebrated, defended and protected. Nothing much can stand in the way of a united Canada.

7. Conclusion

For much of Canada's modern history the concept of sovereignty has been associated with questions of identity, constitutional authority, referendum and the possibility of secession. The twenty-first century has altered the context within which sovereignty takes form.

Constitutional changes will not solve the challenges confronting Canadians today. These challenges arise from geopolitical rivalry, technological disruption, economic transformation, demographic aging, climate change, Arctic security, and the growing complexity of governing in an interdependent world.

The solutions to these challenges depend on the *capacity* to influence the course of events in this increasingly complex, turbulent and interdependent world.

In its *sovereignty moment* Canada is engaged in a process of change to ensure Canada's future prosperity and the wellbeing of its people. This is well within the capacity of Canadians and their governments working together. The problems Canadians are facing in the second quarter of the 21st century are not insurmountable; the Canadian federation has the resources and capabilities to overcome the challenges ahead, but a sovereignty moment requires a collective effort and collective actions.

The most significant risk for Canada to successfully navigate through this challenging period of time is *unity: the capacity for collective actions.*

The repeated use of referendums puts an extraordinary burden on the shoulders of citizens. It puts to a vote, at a moment in time, an existential question that cannot be reduced to a yes or no answer. To some

extent, a referendum on such an existential question is a failure of our system of representative democracy to bring about solutions to the problems people experience in their daily lives as members of society.

The day after a referendum, whatever the outcome, nothing is resolved. There would still be a need to figure out how to face global geopolitical forces, harness the potential of new technologies while mitigating negative impact or to address the needs of an aging population.

Citizens, in their wisdom, may figure out a way to say NO respectfully – NO to referendums, NO to debates that divide instead of uniting, NO to self-inflicted uncertainties that erode the capacity for collective actions. They may find ways to remind their elected officials that whatever the future may hold, the wellbeing of everyone on this vast land is intertwined and that their responsibility is to bring forward solutions to the problems citizens experience collectively.

There is important work to do and more than enough for all. This is Canada's *sovereignty moment*.

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