

Women's Canadian Club of Montreal

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*Canadian Citizenship: Celebrating without Complacency*

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## **Introduction**

Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to be back in Montreal, where I have lived for two four-year periods. The earlier one was after my arrival in Canada at the Port of Montreal in 1969 to start my first academic job at the École Polytechnique.

The second was ten years later when, after working in Quebec City and Edmonton, I came back to Montreal, just before the 1980 referendum on sovereignty-association, to be Vice-Rector of Concordia. At that time, we lived near here on Claremont Avenue in Westmount. Over the years, I have had associations with Montreal's four universities, each of which have awarded me degrees: one earned and three honorary.

I feel very much at home Montreal and am very honoured to speak to the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal for a second time. It is a pleasure to thank Pat Roman for her kind hospitality on both occasions. Indeed, it was also Pat's hospitality that enabled me to earn the degree that I just mentioned, when I set the record for the slowest Masters student in Concordia's history.

Whilst working at École Polytechnique I started a part-time Master's degree in Educational Technology at Sir George Williams University. I did all the coursework and a life-changing internship at the infant UK Open University, but by the time we moved to Alberta in 1977, my proposed thesis on the introduction of computers in Quebec's schools seemed less relevant, so I dropped out of the programme.

However, I continued to be a student throughout my career, taking courses in Quebec History from the Télé-université, management courses from Athabasca University, and a diploma in Theology from Laurentian. I finished the diploma a few years after moving to the UK in 1990 to be vice-chancellor of the Open University – where I had done the life-changing internship nearly 20 years earlier.

I had a hankering to try a part-time law degree, but Kristin, my late wife, sat me down and, after a robust conversation, suggested that if I wanted to continue as a part-time student I should complete the Sir George Williams programme that I had dropped out of in the late 1970s by doing the thesis. This seemed like an excellent idea, so I wrote off to Concordia, which Sir George had now become, asking to re-enrol in my Master's degree.

I received a sublime reply. It said, first, that they didn't re-register people 20 years after their initial enrolment. Second, that all the courses I'd taken in the early 1970s were now obsolete. But third, it added, we see from your CV that you have made good use of your studies in Educational Technology, so welcome back! What a generous and sensible university!

The Open University kindly granted me a month's study leave and I came to Montreal and spent the month of October 1995 in Pat Roman's basement with daily visits to the library. It wasn't planned that way, of course, but the writs came down for the 1995 referendum the day I arrived. I remember some glorious days of fall sunshine as I walked down Cote St. Antoine each day.

My stay ended the day after the vote. I can still visualise sitting around their kitchen table with Pat and Ted Roman as we endured what the Montreal Gazette called the '140 minutes of agony' as the results came in. Ted had put a fresh bottle of Scotch in the middle of the table, but we vowed that we would not open it until the vote turned 'No'. You will all remember what a long evening that was.

Early the next morning, as I took a taxi to Dorval the first lazy snowflakes of winter were falling. They captured the sombre mood of Canada and Quebec on that morning.

I didn't think of that momentous night when I gave Pat the title for my remarks today: *Canadian Citizenship: Celebrating without Complacency*, but it reflects the mood that day of those who treasured a united Canada. Very few people, as they reflected on the result the following morning, imagined that such a narrow win for the 'No' side would bury the issue for 20 years, but that is what it did.

It's worth musing on that as we watch events unfold amidst disarray and recrimination in Catalonia and Spain. We can be proud that Canada had the maturity to face the issue of possible secession of one of its provinces by setting out, in the Clarity Act of 2000, the conditions under which the Government of

Canada would negotiate such separation. Had the law governing such votes been equally clear in Spain the present turmoil might have been avoided.

### **Celebrating Canadian Citizenship**

What are we celebrating when we express satisfaction with being citizens of this country? There's been plenty of debate this year about the concept of citizenship. Not long ago Britain's Prime Minister, Theresa May, said that *"if you believe you're a citizen of the world, you're a citizen of nowhere. You don't understand what the very word 'citizenship' means."*

But against this there are many people, and I am one of them, who invest meaning in the term 'global citizenship'.

For the last five years, I have had the privilege of chairing the international board of the United World Colleges. There are now 17 of these schools and Canada's Lester B. Pearson United World College of the Pacific, established near Victoria, BC in 1974, is the second oldest. The oldest is the UWC of the Atlantic in Wales, of which our new Governor General, Julie Payette, is an alumna.

For completeness, I should also note that our Foreign Minister, Chrystia Freeland, is an alumna of the UWC of the Adriatic, the sixth of the colleges to be created. We are proud to claim these two senior female figures in the Government of Canada as UWC alumni.

Within the United World College movement, we use the term 'global citizen' quite often. Here is a statement from Pearson College. Some of you may know its new president, Désirée McGraw, a Montrealer who was previously Director of the Jeanne Sauvé Foundation here.

What do we mean by global citizenship? If we mean a global passport, there is no such thing.

I came as close as you can to having one when I headed the Education branch of UNESCO and was given a red United Nations 'Laissez-Passer'. Many countries happily stamped it, but was not recognised by many others, including the USA, unless you had a national passport to go with it.

If global citizenship means the ability to feel at home in other countries and to get along with their people, it need not conflict with a firm allegiance to Canada. Both Julie Payette and Chrystia Freeland are models of this combination of commitment to Canada and also to the wider world.

Julie Payette's ancestors arrived in Canada in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, so her roots in this country are deep, yet she speaks six languages and has spent more time in the international space station than any other woman. Chrystia Freeland has also worked extensively overseas. She has the perfect preparation for the tough job of renegotiating NAFTA with our unpredictable neighbour. The outcome of that work will affect all Canadians.

Three weeks ago, our Pearson College UWC held a special event in Toronto to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lester Pearson's Nobel Peace Prize. It brought together all Canada's living previous Foreign Ministers: Joe Clark, Bill Graham, Barbara MacDougall and Lloyd Axworthy. Chrystia Freeland took a short break from the softwood lumber negotiations to join the discussion, which was about Canada's role in the world.

The way that Canada works with the rest of the world is closely related, as it should be, to the way that our people think about the world and each other. Canada is unusual.

Watching the debate from Vancouver, I recorded some memorable quotes about our country:

- 'To collaborate is the hallmark of the Canadian approach'.
- 'Multi-lateralism is the Canadian approach'.
- 'Canada is a reconciling country: we respect the differences we reconcile'.
- 'Canada doesn't have to sit at the head of the table'.
- 'Canada can only succeed when the world works'.

And about Lester Pearson:

- 'Pearson viewed the world as interdependent'.
- 'Pearson was an architect of NATO as well as a diplomat'.
- 'Pearson had the guts to speak truth to power. He opposed giving UN Security Council members vetoes'.

To continue my exploration of the nature of Canadian citizenship I recall some more of my personal experience. I came to Canada in 1969 to an academic post at École Polytechnique. Like many Europeans of my generation, I thought it would be good to get a few years of North American experience before settling down back home.

However, by the time that I was working at the Télé-université five years later, I decided to throw in my lot with Canada and become a citizen. Soon afterwards i

was at a conference in Calgary with some spare time so I went into the Secretary of State's office there and made my citizenship application. The official was quite fastidious. Once he had counted up all the days I had spent outside Canada since my arrival in 1969 he concluded that I had not yet made the five years of residency required.

I thought he was wrong, so the following week, when I was back home in Quebec City, I went to the Secretary of State's office there and applied again. This official welcomed me, glanced at my immigration slip, pulled a Bible out of his desk drawer and had me swear allegiance to the Queen on the spot. I walked out as a proud Canadian and have savoured ever since the contrasting attitudes of the officials in Calgary and Quebec as a nice example of Canadian bureaucratic diversity. In the forty plus years since then the process of becoming a Canadian citizen has, quite rightly, become more systematic.

In 2013, I had the great honour of being appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada. The following year I was invited to preside at citizenship ceremonies whenever no citizenship judge was available and officiated at five of these events in Vancouver. By a nice coincidence, the first of them took place just three hours after my Korean daughter-in-law had become a Canadian at a similar ceremony in Toronto.

At each of the ceremonies there were some 70 new Canadians of all ages present: single people, couples and whole families. There were usually around 25 nationalities represented and their enthusiasm for becoming Canadians was palpable.

I administered the Oath of Allegiance bilingually and all present – and remember this is Vancouver – swore the oath with equal gusto in both official languages! There was certainly no complacency – these people had worked hard to get to Canada, to settle into a new life and to fulfil the conditions for citizenship and for participating fully in the life and governance of this country.

What is the nature of this country – Canada – that they have joined? As immigrants, they themselves are part of its distinctiveness. At the beginning of this year, *The Guardian* newspaper carried an important article by Charles Foran.

He began by stating that 'as 2017 begins, Canada may be the last immigrant nation left standing'. Foran continued: '*Our government believes in the value of immigration, as does the majority of the population. We took in an estimated*

*300,000 newcomers in 2016, including 48,000 refugees, and we want them to become citizens; around 85% of permanent residents eventually do. Recently there have been concerns about bringing in single Arab men, but otherwise Canada welcomes people from all faiths and corners. The greater Toronto area is now the most diverse city on the planet, with half its residents born outside the country; Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa and Montreal aren't far behind. Annual immigration accounts for roughly 1% of the country's current population of 36 million.'*

At a time when many other countries are prey to rising populism and nativism Canada certainly stands out. Some of the accolades may be over-generous, like this cover of *The Economist* a year ago, calling Canada an example to the world. But this came after a period when many western countries turned angrily against immigration in a “global reflex appeal to fear”. Think Brexit. Think walling off Mexico.

Compared to such countries, Canada's cheerful commitment to inclusion may seem naive. But there are practical reasons for keeping the door open. As of the 1990s, low fertility and an aging population began slowing Canada's natural growth rate. Ten years ago, two-thirds of our population increase was courtesy of immigration. By 2030, it is projected to be 100%.

All that we Canadians who are not indigenous to this land must do to recognize the generally happy ending of an immigrant saga is to look in the mirror. My own immediate family is an example. Our children, their spouses, and our grandchildren make up a family of 12. Of these only four are native to Canada, the rest were born in France, Korea, the UK, the US and Uzbekistan. Now we all seem settled in south-western British Columbia after living in four other provinces. We like to think that such diversity enriches Canada.

### **A postnational country**

It also makes Canada different. The title of Foran's article was: *The Canada experiment: is this the world's first postnational country?* He recalled that it was not some radical political scientist, but Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who claimed that ‘there is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada’.

Trudeau was articulating a uniquely Canadian philosophy that some find bewildering, even reckless – but which could represent a radical new model of nationhood. Marshall McLuhan already saw in Canada the raw materials for a dynamic new conception of nationhood noting, more than 50 years ago, that

‘Canada is the only country in the world that knows how to live without an identity’.

When Trudeau made his remark, it caused barely a ripple in Canada. Yet it is impossible to imagine a French, German or Italian politician telling their people that they do not have a core identity. However, as well as understanding the practical challenge of remaining an immigrant country, Canadians, by and large, are also philosophically attuned to an openness that others find startling, even dangerous.

When friends who are new to Canada ask me what they should read to help them understand this country, I send them to John Ralston Saul’s book *‘A Fair Country’*. It’s an inspiring account. He argues that we have practised what Foran calls ‘postnationalism’ for centuries, since long before the nation-state of Canada was formalised in 1867. From the moment that Europeans began arriving in North America they were made welcome by the locals, taught how to survive and thrive amid multiple identities and allegiances and used ideas borrowed from indigenous societies.

Those ideas embrace multiple identities and multiple loyalties. You might call postnationalism an idea of belonging which is comfortable with contradictions.

Of course, that welcome was often betrayed, when settlers in Canada did profound harm to Indigenous people. But, if the imbalance remains, so too does the influence: the model of another way of belonging. There are hopeful signs of better relationships with our First Nations in the next generation.

In their annual speeches to the UN General Assembly, most countries’ leaders puff their history, as did Theresa May, or slam their opponents, as per Donald Trump.

Not so Justin Trudeau, who made a candid confession of Canada’s historic shortcomings in its treatment of indigenous peoples and vowed that his government was now embarked on the long and painstaking process of blending Canada’s constitutional and legal frameworks with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It was courageous of him to bare Canada’s soul in such a public arena, knowing that backsliding on a commitment made in this international setting would be impossible.

This echoes another of John Ralston Saul’s observations, that Canada’s experiment is “perpetually incomplete”. A sovereignty movement like Quebec’s might have led to violence, as we saw recently in Catalonia. Instead, despite a

brief period of separatist agitation that included kidnappings and a murder in 1970, Canada and Quebec have been in constant compromise mode, arguing at the ballot box and finding ways to accommodate.

Canada's incomplete identity is, therefore, a positive, a spur to move forward without spilling blood, to keep thinking and evolving – perhaps, in the end, simply to respond to newness without fear. Today we must bring this attitude to the relationships between the First Nations and our other multiple identities.

Talk of a postnational state and an experiment that is perpetually incomplete is hardly a ringing assertion of Canadian citizenship. However, it is more authentic and hopeful than the new nationalisms emerging elsewhere that have roots in racial identities and exclusionary narratives. The very ambiguity and diversity of Canadian identity is something to celebrate.

### **Looking to the future**

Moreover, they help us respond well to contemporary challenges. Just two examples.

First, in a world that is urbanising rapidly, Canada is good at creating well-functioning and pleasant cities. This is the 2016 ranking of the 15 most liveable cities in world. You can see that Canada has four cities on the list: Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary and Montreal. No American city makes the cut.

Second, we are often told that success today depends on innovation and exploiting artificial intelligence. Just two weeks ago the Economist newspaper, in an article entitled '*The founding of Maple Valley*', showed that the neural networks, used in Silicon Valley to calculate functions too complex for humans to write, were largely invented not in California but here in Canada. It comments that 'Canada has made a virtue of limited resources by developing an alternative model of innovation based on openness to unorthodox ideas'.

We have much to celebrate. This year The Economist's Canada Summit made the statement that 'Canada has long been lauded as a liberal beacon on the world stage: open borders, sensible gun-control laws, extensive health-care coverage and a serious climate policy.' It then asked: 'but is the current state of affairs sustainable?' It is up to us to ensure that it is.

I recall the statement that Chrystia Freeland made in the Foreign Ministers discussion that I mentioned earlier, when she remarked that 'Canada can only succeed when the world works'.



There's plenty that is not working in the world today, but there are also many reasons for optimism. Read a short book by the Swedish historian Johan Norberg, *Progress: Ten Reasons to Look Forward to the Future*. He documents the enormous progress that has been made in vital areas of life all over the world. This is not just over previous centuries, but also over the recent decades since the 'good old days' that some populist politicians hark back to. The trends he identifies are consistent and can survive occasional political setbacks.

### **Three imperatives**

We have a threefold challenge as Canadians. First, within Canada we must sustain the exciting developments through which we are redefining what it means to be a country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Second, we must trust each other as citizens and strengthen trust in our institutions. In his book, *Trust and the Reconstitution of Social Order*, Francis Fukuyama argued persuasively that the economic, social and cultural success of nations relates directly to the trust that their people have in each other and in their institutions.

Some countries flourished because strangers learned to trust one another when signing contracts, allowing them to do deals outside the circles of family, tribal or in-group kinship relied upon in low-trust societies. Contrast Sweden and Sicily or Norway and Nigeria.

Trust in government is one of many measures that the Economist Intelligence Unit conflates to produce its annual democracy index. Canada ranks at number six among the 19 countries assessed as 'full democracies'. One example of this is that Canada has more trust in its Parliament than most countries, although the 40% figure in this ten-year old data is nothing to be proud of.

Last year's vicious campaigns to UK and US voters were deeply corrosive of trust, although in the US public trust in government has been declining from 80% to 20% over 50 years. As a result, in 2016, for the first time, the US no longer ranked among the world's 19 'full democracies', but has been demoted to 'flawed democracy'. This was before the election of Donald Trump.

Third, we must engage with the world 'so that it works', in Chrystia Freeland's words. To collaborate is the hallmark of the Canadian approach, which means reinforcing our historic commitment to multi-lateralism even when other nations are abandoning it.

Let us celebrate our Canadian citizenship proudly, but without complacency!