

COMMENT

Raising Canada's international profile is in our best interests

If Canada is perceived as inconsequential, we will neither be taken seriously by the Americans in any negotiation nor be supported by allies.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, left, and Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly. The country's leaders and diplomats should make a concerted media effort to promote Canada globally, writes Andrew Caddell. Photograph courtesy of Flickr/NATO

FORT MYERS, FLA.—“We are so sorry.” Never in my life have I heard so many Americans apologizing to Canadians, and not the reverse. Almost everyone I met in the last week in Florida was apologetic, expressing their embarrassment over United States President Donald Trump's harangues about Canada, the imposition of tariffs and the “51st state.”

I was in the U.S. attending the St. Petersburg Conference on World Affairs, an event organized by academics, journalists, and former diplomats who live in the Tampa-St. Petersburg area. The speakers and participants reflected that demographic, and included many retired foreign service personnel, military leaders, and retired professors. The theme of this year's conference was “The Ties that Bind.”

The keynote speaker of the event, Stuart Eizenstat, served with the Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton administrations in senior roles, and was U.S. ambassador to the European Union. He has recently published something of a memoir, *The Art of Diplomacy*, which sets out the requirements, approaches, and skills for effective diplomacy. He provides examples of American diplomacy dating as far back as Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger's approaches to China in the 1970s to George Mitchell's role in negotiating the “Good Friday Accord” in Ireland in 1998. His thesis is both sides in a negotiation need to see a resolution “as in their mutual interest.”

I spoke in sessions on the use and misuse of data, Quebec nationalism, and with international journalists discussing the response to Trump's election. The other panellists came from Germany, Africa, and Latin America. I took the conference theme and said Canada's concern was the “unwinding of the ties” with the U.S.

I outlined Canadian reaction to the imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminum and the patriotic call to fly the Maple Leaf flag on Feb 15. I explained Canada's relationship with the U.S. in the 20th century, and how the Cold War began in Ottawa with the revelations of Igor Gouzenko in September 1945. And while we could grasp George Kennan's theory of containment of the Soviets, and Ronald Reagan's “shining city on a hill,” we had to go back to the 19th century—the Monroe Doctrine and “Manifest Destiny”—to grasp what Trump is now thinking.

And indeed, that was the case in many other panels. Europe, Latin America, and Asia have all seen their own respective political and economic oxen gored by

Trump. In contrast, Africa's fear was being ignored: in light of Trump's cutbacks to USAID and the pullout from the World Health Organization, there is a fear there would be no American support for Africa in the future.

The most worrisome trend for me was the abysmal knowledge of Canada. Indeed, aside from the awareness of Trump's vituperative eruptions, Canada didn't figure in anyone's assessments. In a session on NATO, Canada was never mentioned, even though we are its seventh largest contributor. When I asked the lead participant, an Italian-American who lectures on NATO, he said it was due to the focus on European capacity for defence. In a session on international trade, Mexico and China were named as America's primary trading partners, not Canada.

As this phenomenon repeated itself in private conversations, it struck me there was an immense need for Canada to be recognized as we would neither be taken seriously by the Americans in any negotiation nor be supported by allies if perceived as inconsequential on the world stage.

In a recent report in *La Presse*, former Canadian ambassador to Washington Raymond Chrétien said of our once-good relationship with the U.S.: “All that has just fallen by the wayside. We once negotiated hard, but with respect. Never with threats. And now we're threatened.” However, for those who believe we should cut hydro power to threaten the U.S., he added, “Americans won't negotiate with a knife to their throat.”

So, what is the answer? I believe it lies in a concerted media effort by our leaders and diplomats to promote Canada globally, and to establish our credentials as a progressive, wealthy, influential trading nation. One that takes its international responsibilities and sovereignty seriously. Otherwise, we will be vulnerable in negotiation as the anonymous player on the world stage, given little credit for anything.

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The Hill Times

OPINION



Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Gary Anandasangaree. Regulations affecting land use, environmental protections, and resource development can be enacted without a structured review of their impact on Indigenous rights, writes Chief Byron Louis. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Why Indigenous rights must be integrated into Canada's regulatory process

Without a transparent approach, the government is reinforcing systemic exclusion and delaying progress on reconciliation.

Byron Louis

Opinion



Canada prides itself on being a leader in reconciliation and Indigenous rights, yet there is a glaring gap in our federal regulatory process. Every new regulation undergoes a Regulatory Impact Assessment Statement to evaluate its effects on businesses, the environment, and social equity. However, there is no mandatory assessment of its impact on Indigenous rights—a fundamental oversight that undermines constitutional obligations and reconciliation efforts.

Under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, Canada has a legal duty to recognize and protect Indigenous and treaty rights. Yet, unlike the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the Canadian Bill of Rights, Indigenous rights are not explicitly included in the Regulatory Impact Assessment Statement (RIAS) framework. This means regulations can be introduced without any formal examination of their implications for Indigenous communities.

The consequences of this omission are profound. Regulations affecting land use, environmental protections, and resource development can be enacted without a structured review of their impact on Indigenous rights. This creates legal uncertainty, increases the risk of constitutional challenges, and contradicts the government's stated commitment to reconciliation.

The solution is clear: amend the Regulatory Instruments Act (RIA) to require a mandatory Indigenous rights assessment in the RIAS process. This change would bring Canada's regulatory framework in line with its constitutional obligations, and prevent the government from inadvertently enacting regulations that violate Indigenous rights.

There is a strong precedent for this. British Columbia has already amended its Interpretation Act to require that all laws and regulations be interpreted as upholding Indigenous and treaty rights. The federal government should follow suit.

The RIAS framework has evolved over time to include other important considerations. For example, the 2015 Red Tape Reduction Act mandated a review to prevent unnecessary burdens on small businesses. In 2016, Gender-Based Analysis Plus became a required component of regulatory assessments to ensure gender equity. If business and gender considerations are essential in policymaking, why are Indigenous rights still excluded?

Canada has committed to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), a framework designed to uphold Indigenous rights in all areas of governance. However, the lack of a formal Indigenous impact assessment in regulatory processes directly contradicts this commitment, signalling a gap between policy rhetoric and legislative action. Without a transparent approach about how government is assessing how proposed regulations impact Indigenous rights, it is reinforcing systemic exclusion and delaying progress on reconciliation. Embedding Indigenous considerations into RIAS is a concrete step toward fulfilling UNDRIP obligations and ensuring a more fair and inclusive regulatory process.

This is not about adding unnecessary bureaucracy. It is about ensuring that Indigenous rights are given the same weight as other fundamental considerations in regulation-making. By amending the RIA, Parliament can bring Canada's regulatory system in line with its constitutional obligations, and advance reconciliation in a tangible way.

The federal government has a clear choice to either continue overlooking how its policies affect Indigenous rights during regulatory decision-making, or to take decisive action to embed them into the RIAS process.

Byron Louis is chief of the *Okanagan Indian Band*, and a member of the *Sylix Okanagan Nation* in British Columbia. With more than 32 years in political leadership and policy development, he has been a strong advocate for Indigenous rights, sustainable resource management, and economic development.
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