

Maybe it's time to revisit nationhood

Canada Day is the perfect time to get patriotic about this big, beautiful nation of ours.

And judging by the immoderate (get it — it's a beer commercial) success of the Molson Canadian rant, we're sufficiently primed.

Still, there's nothing like the melding of Canada's birthday and an impending federal election to show just how wide and deep the fault lines around the notion of a united Canada are.

Even federalist to the bone former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau seems to have stopped dragging his creaky self out of retirement to sing its praises.

But political parochialism is threatening to cap politeness as Canada's top trait lately and if I didn't know better, I'd suspect no one much likes anyone anymore.

The only party not seeming to grasp this is the Canadian Alliance and the geographical data of these guys is being skewered like a shish-kebob.

Two are too Alberta for Ontario. A third is too Ontario for Alberta.

A fourth resides in British Columbia, which thinks it's part of California and won't be voting anyway.

According to barroom wisdom, you can't buy an elected prime minister these days who isn't from Quebec. Perhaps to challenge the notion, those Alliance guys have been accused of trying.

And this obsession with 'it's not what you say, it's where you're from' isn't just national.

True blue Torontonians speak with contempt of the 905 regions.

The 905 regions are often happy to return the sentiment.

And I once interviewed a pretty well-known Alberta singer who wouldn't warm up to me until I assured him I wasn't born in Ontario and if I had been, it wouldn't really have been my fault.

But just ask and we'll all say we love Canada. Which we do. Just not the people in it. Or something.

Federalism today reminds me of a frazzled marriage counselor trying to rein in the unruly resentments of a couple who tired of each other long ago.

If they really wanted to be there, it wouldn't be such a hard slog to keep them together.

Meanwhile, we're so wary of our giant

southern neighbour. Sure. Blame the big, oblivious guy next door instead of all the damage wrought by incessant in-fighting.

Personally, I adore where I live, and my patriotism is perhaps bolstered by virtue of being borrowed.

I was born in New York. I was raised largely in Ontario, but lived for spells in Boston, Florida and California.

I left the latter shortly before the eruption of the race riot that made Rodney King famous, and most of us ashamed.

I won't denigrate my birthplace, but there are aspects of it that scare me.



Gentle persuasion

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Borders are flexible, and there have been a host of boundary changes around the globe in my lifetime. One even in Canada.

Maybe it's time to revisit the entire notion of nationhood in this country.

Actually, I kind of support the principle of federalism.

But then, I support long, untroubled marriages, happy childhoods and summer all year long, too.

Or maybe we can use July 1 to call a cease-fire on the internal potshots, open the highest office in the land up to anyone with the guts and gumption (not geographical background) to go for it, and look to something other than a beer commercial for patriotism.

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