

Jean Chrétien: Canadians will never give up the best country in the world to join the U.S.

By [Global Research News](#)

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Our best wishes to Jean Chrétien. Long Live Jean Chrétien

Today is my 91st birthday.

It's an opportunity to celebrate with family and friends. To look back on the life I've had the privilege to lead. And to reflect on how much this country we all love so much has grown and changed over the course of the nine decades I've been on this Earth.

This year, I've also decided to give myself a birthday present. I'm going to do something in this article that I don't do very often anymore, and sound off on a big issue affecting the state of the nation and profoundly bothering me and so many other Canadians: The totally unacceptable insults and unprecedented [threats](#) to our very sovereignty from U.S. president-elect Donald Trump.

I have two very clear and simple messages.

To [Donald Trump](#), from one old guy to another: Give your head a shake! What could make you think that Canadians would ever give up the best country in the world – and make no mistake, that is what we are – to join the United States?

I can tell you Canadians prize our independence. We love our country. We have built something here that is the envy of the world – when it comes to compassion, understanding, tolerance and finding a way for people of different backgrounds and faiths to live together in harmony.

We've also built a strong social safety net – especially with public health care – that we are very proud of. It's not perfect, but it's based on the principle that the most vulnerable among us should be protected.

This may not be the “American Way” or “the Trump Way.” But it is the reality I have witnessed and lived my whole long life.



If you think that threatening and insulting us is going to win us over, you really don't know a thing about us. You don't know that when it came to fighting in two world wars for freedom, we signed up - both times - years before your country did. We fought and we sacrificed well beyond our numbers.

We also had the guts to say no to your country when it tried to drag us into a completely unjustified and destabilizing war in Iraq.

We built a nation across the most rugged, challenging geography imaginable. And we did it against the odds.

We may look easy-going. Mild-mannered. But make no mistake, we have spine and toughness.



And that leads me to my second message, to all our leaders, federal and provincial, as well as those who are aspiring to lead our country: Start showing that spine and toughness. That's what Canadians want to

see - what they need to see. It's called leadership. You need to lead. Canadians are ready to follow.

I know the spirit is there. Ever since Mr. Trump's attacks, every political party is speaking out in favour of Canada. In fact, it is to my great satisfaction that even the Bloc Québécois is defending Canada.

But you don't win a hockey game by only playing defence. **We all know that even when we satisfy one demand, Mr. Trump will come back with another, bigger demand. That's not diplomacy; it's blackmail.**

We need another approach - one that will break this cycle.

Mr. Trump has accomplished one thing: He has unified Canadians more than we have been ever before! All leaders across our country have united in resolve to defend Canadian interests.

When I came into office as prime minister, Canada faced a national unity crisis. The threat of Quebec separation was very real. We took action to deal with this existential threat in a manner that made Canadians, including Quebecers, stronger, more united and even prouder of Canadian values.

Now there is another existential threat. And we once again need to reduce our vulnerability. That is the challenge for *this* generation of political leaders.

And you won't accomplish it by using the same old approaches. Just like we did 30 years ago, we need a Plan B for 2025.

Yes, telling the Americans we are their best friends and closest trading partner is good. So is lobbying hard in Washington and the state capitals, pointing out that tariffs will [hurt](#) the American economy too. So are retaliatory tariffs - when you are attacked, you have to defend yourself.

But we also have to play offence. Let's tell Mr. Trump that we too have border issues with the United States. Canada has tough gun control legislation, but illegal guns are pouring in from the U.S. We need to tell him that we expect the United States to act to reduce the number of guns crossing into Canada.

We also want to protect the Arctic. But the United States refuses to recognize the Northwest Passage, insisting that it is an international waterway, even though it flows through the Canadian Arctic as Canadian waters. We need the United States to recognize the Northwest Passage as being Canadian waters.

We also need to reduce Canada's vulnerability in the first place. We need to be stronger. There are more trade barriers between provinces than between Canada and the United States. Let's launch a national project to get rid of those barriers! And let's strengthen the ties that bind this vast nation together through projects such as real national energy grid.

We also have to understand that Mr. Trump isn't just threatening us; he's also targeting a growing list of other countries, as well as the European Union itself, and he is just getting started. Canada should quickly convene a meeting of the leaders of Denmark, Panama,

Mexico, as well as with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, to formulate a plan for fighting back these threats.

Every time that Mr. Trump opens his mouth, he creates new allies for all of us. So let's get organized! To fight back against a big, powerful bully, you need strength in numbers.

The whole point is not to wait in dread for Donald Trump's next blow. It's to build a country and an international community that can withstand those blows.

Canadians know me. They know I am an optimist. That I am practical. And that I always speak my mind. I made my share of mistakes over a long career, but I never for a moment doubted the decency of my fellow Canadians - or of my political opponents.

The current and future generations of political leaders should remember they are not each other's enemies - they are opponents. Nobody ever loved the cut-and-thrust of politics more than me, but I always understood that each of us was trying to make a positive contribution to make our community or country a better place.

That spirit is more important now than ever, as we address this new challenge. Our leaders should keep that in mind.

I am 91 today and blessed with good health. I am ready at the ramparts to help defend the independence of our country as I have done all my life.

Vive le Canada!

Jean Chrétien

Jean Chrétien served as the 20th prime minister of Canada from 1993 to 2003.

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