

# Rethinking: co-operative self-sufficiency in response to imposed tariffs

*Heather Anne Wakeling Lister - April 2025*

Those having lived through abusive relationships were most likely nauseous during that infamous Zelensky, Trump and Vance televised thrashing. Classic abuse—eerily familiar. Unmitigated blame for Russian aggression on Zelensky. Unrelenting taunts to grovel and be ‘grateful’ for the lies meant to manipulate reality. Devaluation began with initial criticism of Zelensky’s appearance. Conversation was by domination, not shared ideas. For special-effect came Vance’s perfect example of the ‘hillbilly code’ eloquently described in his book ‘Hillbilly Elegy’. Perhaps most disturbing was how the audience, many with heads lowered, allowed the abuse to continue.

Closer to home, Canadian businesses are subjected to erratic statements from the Oval Office. While still our then prime minister, Justin Trudeau made a cautionary comment: “The excuse that he’s giving for these tariffs today of fentanyl is completely bogus, completely unjustified, completely false.” Adding that “what he wants is to see a total collapse of the Canadian economy, because that’ll make it easier to annex us.”

The Canadian border was established when sections of Turtle Island were claimed under British dominion. Despite war between First Nation, American, French and English Loyalist interests, we ‘mostly’ made peace after the War of 1812. For good, bad or indifferent, during the two centuries following that era of conflict a sovereign nation was created—one that has negotiated additional Indigenous treaties with the Crown as well as international trade agreements.

Trump 101 gave Canada fair warning, by shooting tariffs across the border. Although short-lived, caution should have been noted, that as with any abuser, just when one thinks they have secured a safe footing, and an aggressor is allowed to return, behaviour is repeated with vindictive viciousness.

Through the voting process, the American public re-invited volatility into their Oval Office: Project 2024 and 2025 are unnerving reads. As a result, Americans -- either Republican and Democrat -- are all in the path of a stampede led by Elon Musk. His DOGE ‘team’ stomping over what had been solid foundations under trade agreements and American institutions churned into sand and rubble.

Abuse survivors know that one must detach from economic chokeholds limiting their freedom to choose. To survive, one cultivates quiet, careful observation, honing an instinct of when to act quickly, drawing on courage and a pre-prepared safety plan of escape.

As logic is illusive within intended chaos, seeing a way out only becomes clear when a person steps out of the intentional whirlwind and observes from a distance. Once reality becomes clear, resolutions often hinder based on kitchen table budgets. Oddly enough, successful survivors know that the only way to obtain true self-reliance is to reach toward positive co-operative help. And, at times, with hands humbled through circumstance, accept charity with grace.

I find it interesting to compare how the Canadian consumer has reacted to ‘negotiated abuse’ by instinctively incorporating survival tactics. Quietly listening to political volatility, the threats, watching as stock markets crash against the ever-increasing cost of living, people are making ‘alternative’ plans while they go about upholding the adult responsibilities of daily life.

In particular, the Canadian consumer has been quietly disengaging from chaos by stepping around the abuser and tariff increases. They are doing so by purposely spending hard-earned money on local, or ‘Product/of/Made-in-Canada’ items, or on goods imported from Commonwealth or allied countries.

Quiet, effective resistance—more powerful than any policy, rhetoric or trade war, how a person spends their wages is the best weapon of resistance and cultural change.

Case in point. In 2024, 41 million Canadians purchased \$349 billion in goods from the U.S. Which translates into each Canadian buying \$8,522 of American goods.

Alternatively, 340 million Americans purchased \$413 billion Canadian goods. That amounts to only \$1,215 spent by each American.

That’s a lot of Canadian dollars being sent outside the country.

Using household dollars, Canadians have, without announcement, disengaged from the Oval Office’s narcissistic belief that they hold absolute economic power over our collective future, even citizenship.

Additionally, business tenders are using Canadian procurement as a tool to create bidding processes

that support co-operative, self reliance within our borders.

Contrary to political rhetoric, Canada is not broken. She may have stretched herself a bit too wide, but she's snapping that elastic border back to mid-girdle.

Not to neglect thousands of American customers or suppliers with whom we have built good relationships, because after all quality, reliability and trust go a long way—however, there is wisdom in having a back-up plan.

It's time to reach out to other Commonwealth alliances for help to ensure continuous trade. Remove Canadian trade barriers between provinces and territories, including transportation restrictions, and erase irritations such as 'font' restrictions on labels.

Support farmers, shop the local markets, retailers. Enjoy a Canadian vacation, or visit other warm weather locations -- because I'll bet a Loonie other countries would welcome Canadians for extended winter holidays -- no fingerprinting required.