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True North in
Canadian public policy

A MANDATE FOR CANADA

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In advance of the 2019 federal election, MLI has released a new series designed to offer practical public policy recommendations for the post-election government. Titled "**A Mandate for Canada**," this series of short analyses will cover a range of pressing issues that any incoming government will need to address, including Indigenous affairs, foreign and security issues, and economic and fiscal policy.

Moving from Toxic Dependency: A New Agenda for Indigenous Economic Empowerment

John Paul and Ken Coates

Introduction

The typical political calculus in Canada rarely fails to disappoint. Politicians at the municipal, federal, and provincial levels entice voters with tax money, promising a wide variety of program improvements and local investments. It's been a generations-long bidding war in which voters are plied with billions of dollars of their own tax money. Often there is little analysis of the costs and benefits, whether the funds are being allocated to real areas of need, or whether government spending could be counterproductive.

This old story is particularly well known to Canada's Indigenous peoples. After the election of the Liberal Party in 2015, there have been many more promises for increases in program spending than there have been political discussions about addressing the historical and legal relationships at the heart of the issues.

This division of administrative and political focus and spending is captured in the separation of the old Department of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development into two units: The Department of Indigenous Services and the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. The government of Canada routinely makes multi-million-dollar commitments to housing, language education, rural broadband, and government

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programming, without providing the country with a comprehensive portrait of the nature of the problem and the degree to which current-year government spending deals with identified and urgent needs. The reluctance to do so is understandable. It is clearly better politics to emphasize the expenditure of several million dollars on 83 homes in Nunavut than it is to admit that the allocation falls a great deal short of the 3,000 housing units desperately needed in the territory (Nation to Nation 2019).

While officials can no longer ignore the need for action, it would be simplistic to say that Indigenous affairs in Canada are at a crossroads, for that suggests a decision-point between two clear and obvious options. The situation is far more complex. Conditions in Indigenous communities vary greatly. Some Indigenous groups are covered by historic treaties; others have modern and comprehensive agreements. Court decisions have re-empowered Indigenous peoples, albeit with uneven effects across the country. Dozens of First Nations have either got out from under the *Indian Act* or are exploring the means of doing so. Numerous self-government agreements have been negotiated. Many communities are seeing rising employment and increased prosperity.

But other communities struggle with basic administration and face staggering shortfalls in government services. Close to one quarter of First Nations are under third-party management, which imposes external financial and administrative control over Indigenous governments (Pasternak 2017). Many are impoverished and with few prospects. According to data from the 2016 census, four out of five First Nations reserves have median incomes that fall below the poverty line (Clarke 2018).

Many Indigenous people have migrated from their home communities, often far away from their traditional territories, forcing Indigenous governments to reimagine their approaches towards program delivery. Major shortcomings with local infrastructure – poor water supplies, serious housing deficiencies, inadequate Internet, mediocre roads – limit local opportunities to a degree that non-Indigenous Canadians still do not understand.

No one strategy, approach, policy, program, legal restructuring, or political agreement will address the needs, aspirations, and shortcomings of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and communities in the short-term. Several things, however, are clear:

- The status quo of Indigenous living standards and quality of life is not acceptable to Indigenous peoples or their governments, nor to federal, provincial, or territorial governments, nor to Canadians as whole.
- Canadians are generally supportive of the investments necessary to bring about major improvements in the lives of Indigenous peoples but are skeptical of the current suite of programs and policies.
- Conversely, Canadians have not fully internalized – as they have in Scandinavia – the most basic government commitments to Indigenous communities: that all people in the country have the right to comparable levels of public infrastructure and government services. There is a major irony here. The country's equalization program is designed to ensure rough equality in provincial services and programs across the country. But this commitment, fundamental to Canadian federalism, does not extend to Indigenous peoples.
- Indigenous peoples have been advocating, unrelentingly, for changes in government programs and for a greater say in determining priorities and budget allocations, typically with little or only incremental success.
- Indigenous communities and governments turned to the courts to secure recognition of their treaty, Indigenous and, after 1982, constitutional rights, gradually gaining authority over a variety of administrative and economic matters.

- The current Liberal government is well-disposed to both expanding Indigenous jurisdiction and improving funding in many program areas; the New Democratic Party is, officially, committed to similar program support. The Conservative Party in Canada is more supportive of legal accords and Indigenous self-government than program growth, and historically prefers local or regional approaches to the search for nation-wide solutions.

Post-War Social Welfare Programming

The government of Canada has long attempted to impose its will on Indigenous peoples in a variety of legislative and regulatory ways. Shortly after Canada became a nation, Ottawa assigned First Nations to reserves, limited their options through the rules of the *Indian Act*, adopted specific measures to undermine such vital Indigenous traditions as the potlatch and sun dance, and imposed strict limits on Indigenous communities' use of money and land. Indian Agents controlled First Nations governments. Thousands of Indigenous children were sent to government-financed residential schools, run by the churches before the 1950s, where the government sought to undermine and eliminate cultural influences. Government knew "best," and it directed that Indigenous people should be converted to Christianity, turned into industrial or agricultural workers, and trained to follow the dictates of government agents.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit pushed back. Those in northern and remote regions where commercial agriculture was not viable and where the industrial economy had not penetrated extensively were left to their own devices. They continued to hunt, trap, fish, and occasionally worked for wages, generally free from government oversight until after World War II. In agricultural zones and around cities, the Department of Indian Affairs took a much more aggressive stance and tried to direct Indigenous peoples toward the national mainstream, but with limited results (Carter 1993; Coates 1991).

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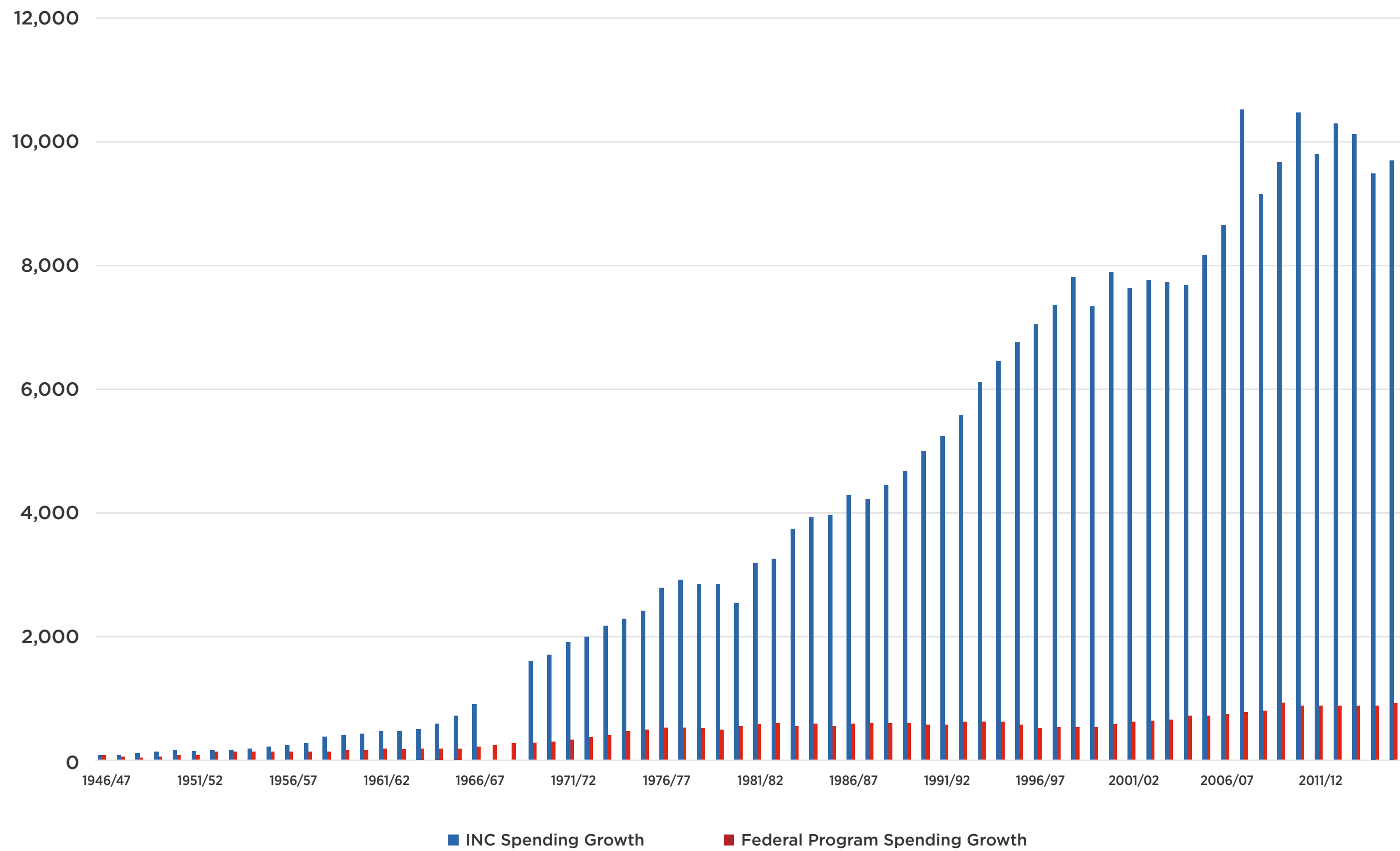
Much of the commentary on Indigenous affairs in Canada emphasizes, understandably, the long historical roots of official discrimination, paternalism, and manipulation of Indigenous peoples by the government of Canada. The challenges of the contemporary Indigenous population are tied directly to the actions of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald and other post-Confederation politicians. The wounds from these historical injustices run deep. But the current challenges have more recent roots. Until after World War II, many Indigenous peoples lived outside the full reach and authority of the state. Government expenditures on welfare and other state supports were small; to a degree that has been largely forgotten, Indigenous peoples continued to look after themselves economically, in substantial measure by hunting, fishing, gardening, trapping, and gathering. Traditional practices and customs remained strong, as did Indigenous languages across much of the country (although the dislocations associated with residential schools and day schools was increasingly taking hold) (Miller 2018; Dickason and McNab 1992).

The situation changed substantially after World War II. The government of Canada became much more engaged in addressing the country's social and economic issues after 1945. In an era defined by the activist state, government discovered a renewed sense of purpose. It turned with considerable fervor from a focus directed almost solely on its successful war effort to social programming (Hamilton 1994).

As a result, Ottawa launched numerous social and economic equality initiatives aimed at disadvantaged regions and populations, poor communities, and Indigenous communities. Through the 1960s and early 1970s, the government expanded immigration, broadening the national and cultural base of the newcomer population. The goal behind the wide-ranging government investments, put simply, was to provide a rough equality of opportunity for people across the country, with major national, provincial, and territorial investments in public education, post-secondary education, health care, housing, regional and national infrastructure, and various social services (Bothwell, Drummond, and English 1989).

In no area of government endeavour was the commitment to state-driven intervention more apparent than in Indigenous affairs. Indeed, the government of Canada launched – with strong and well-intentioned motives, to be sure – the most comprehensive plan for investment and program expansion targeted at Indigenous peoples in Canadian history. The scale has been lost in the fog of constant program change. In the 1950s, government spending on Indigenous peoples represented a small percentage of total government spending (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Growth in total Indigenous Affairs funding vs. Total program funding, 1946-2015 (1946/47 = 100)



Sources: Canada, Department of Finance, 2008, 2016; Library and Archives Canada, 2014; Flanagan and Jackson 2017

The swift expansion of the welfare state, especially in programs targeted at Indigenous peoples, resulted in the rapid growth of federal spending in subsequent decades. As Mark Milke reported for the Fraser Institute:

> Data gleaned from federal archives and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada shows that spending per registered First Nations person jumped to $9,056 per person by 2012 from $922 in 1950 (the figures are adjusted for inflation so this is an apple-apple comparison). That's an 882 per cent per capita increase in real terms. (Milke, n.d.)

By 2019, the federal government was highlighting the rapid increase in expenditures on Indigenous affairs: "With Budget 2019, the total federal government investments in Indigenous programs are more than $17 billion in 2021–22, an increase of 50 per cent compared to the year the government was elected" (Canada 2019).

If government expenditures served as a surrogate for true affection, then Indigenous peoples in Canada were much favoured.

The allocation of these massive sums, coordinated by a large bureaucracy in the since-divided department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, consisting of 10 regional and local offices and more than 4,500 employees, is based on a simple expectation: direct spending on a targeted population should produce substantial improvements in selected outcomes. This is the foundation of the Canadian welfare state and, indeed, of social democratic governments in general.

Some of the spending has obvious and direct benefits and meets urgent needs. Payments for Indigenous health cover the cost of doctors, nurses, medical centres, and medical evacuations. Money spent on a new road improves transportation. Funds for repairs to a recreation centre provide Indigenous youth with after-school opportunities. Other benefits, like welfare payments and old age pensions, give people the means to buy food, clothes, and other necessities. In this regard, the situation facing Indigenous peoples is much the same as for Canadians as a whole, with the significant caveat that the allocations are comparatively small and fall far short of actual needs.

But the core assumptions are rarely questioned.

- Has the right amount of money been allocated?
- Has the money been spent wisely and efficiently?
- Have the programs and investments been monitored and evaluated for effectiveness and impacts?
- Collectively, have the suite of government of Canada programs, services, infrastructure investments, and other government contributions produced appropriate and desired results for the target population?
- Is government spending, with all the associated procedures, oversight requirements, and reporting obligations, the best means of supporting Indigenous aspirations and meeting community needs?

There are often subsidiary considerations involved beyond these questions. The social welfare programs for Indigenous peoples expanded at a time of rapid growth in the natural resource economy and the development of the Canadian road and rail systems across the sub-Arctic and Arctic. These activities disrupted Indigenous communities, interfered with traditional harvesting, and accelerated the move to government-built reserve communities. The national commitment to K to 12 education resulted in Indigenous families being encouraged to adopt sedentary lifestyles and to move to government reserves. Whatever the cause – altruism, paternalism, racism, cultural superiority, or the desire to clear a path to easier resource development – the role of government in Indigenous lives expanded exponentially. So how did conditions for Indigenous peoples change?

In the 1950s, Indigenous communities were healthy, Indigenous language use was commonplace, and traditional family and community structures remained operational. But the same period that saw a rapid growth in

bureaucratic intervention and government spending also witnessed some incredibly tragic social outcomes, ranging from skyrocketing teenage suicide rates and drug and alcohol addiction to the decline in harvesting activities, the near collapse of many Indigenous languages, and widespread dependence on government transfer payments. Domestic and intra-group violence, excessive engagement with the criminal justice system, and serious health outcomes co-exist alongside housing crises, dozens of boiled water advisories, and other serious community infrastructure deficiencies. Despite the expenditures of large amounts of government money, clearly not enough money has been spent on key Indigenous requirements.

The suggestion is not that the growth in government spending necessarily caused the societal difficulties. Rather, it is to point out that increased government spending has not slowed, let alone addressed, the fundamental challenges facing Indigenous peoples and communities. The issue is critical. Supporters of extensive government intervention work on the assumption that government spending will address and set right the challenges facing Indigenous communities. The evidence from the past 50 years suggests that government spending does not produce the desired results.

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The situation is not entirely dire. Over the past 30 years, educational opportunities for Indigenous people have expanded dramatically, marked by the closure of the last residential schools, additional local schooling, and a major expansion of apprenticeship, college, and university offerings. Indigenous people with a solid education or training and living in an area with decent employment opportunities have found jobs and earned decent incomes. Life expectancy has expanded, largely due to sharp declines in infant mortality rates as well as better access to health care. For example, Statistics Canada has recorded an average increase in life expectancy of “one to two years” from the expectancy that was “recorded for the Aboriginal population in 2001” (Statistics Canada 2015).

Indigenous business growth has, over the past two decades, been the most promising aspect of Aboriginal life, producing thousands of new companies that employ tens of thousands of Indigenous peoples. Many Indigenous communities have gone from administering poverty to administering prosperity.

The expansion of federal government programs occurred precisely because politicians and administrators believed that a dramatic growth in government engagement would produce better outcomes. The government’s logic, traceable to the 19th century idea that government knew what was “best” for Indigenous peoples, was clear: sedentary lifestyles were better than mobile ones and living on government-managed reserves was better than living among non-Indigenous peoples. The government believed that its oversight of band finances and administrative decisions worked better than Indigenous autonomy.

Under the intrusive dictates of the 1876 *Indian Act*, government resource allocations were preferential to decisions made by bands, tribal councils, or national Indigenous organizations. The core assumption was that government should establish program priorities and administer Indigenous affairs. The paternalism, centralization, and non-Indigenous cultural imperatives of post-World War II governance are clear, but they were wrapped in a veneer of social democracy, 1960s social revolution and statism, and well-intentioned concern for the downtrodden. These ideas die hard.

While Canadians occasionally pushed back against the rapid rise in expenditures, the idea that there might be negative consequences associated with state intrusions surfaced rarely outside of Indigenous communities, in large measure because of the absence of well-known examples of Indigenous-led improvements in conditions.

Toxic Dependency

It is important to recognize that Indigenous programs became, to many Indigenous communities, an all-encompassing, all-embracing, institutional straight jacket. By the 1950s, the government was determining where permanent communities would be situated. It built government-designed housing, offered government-structured welfare and pension systems, imposed Indian Affairs bureaucracies through local Indian Agents, and provided an array of social, cultural, and economic development programs.

Rules and procedures came with the programs and the funding. Over time – and accelerating toward the end of the 20th century – the federal government required extensive applications for a growing number of programs, with each successful grant carrying elaborate reporting requirements. Rather than transferring funds to communities to use as required, the federal government kept firm control over the allocations. (Importantly, the federal government is now experimenting with new approaches, including longer term, 10-year block funding for communities and combined funding for multiple programs with the communities free to shift funding between priority areas.)

The result, shifting from the distant neglect of the early 1950s to the intense government interventions of the early 21st century, was to create toxic levels of dependency. This occurred at the personal level as individual Indigenous peoples and families became reliant, for multiple generations, on government transfer payments. Many were locked into a seemingly perpetual cycle of applications, reviews, and reporting. The dependency was experienced at the community level as well, with individual Indigenous governments lacking the own-source revenues needed to establish and maintain real autonomy from the federal government.

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The absurdity of the system was exemplified by Indigenous leaders negotiating land claims, self-government accords, and other arrangements with the same agency and officials who were responsible for welfare payments, funding for government operations, and support for local infrastructure. These arrangements left Indigenous peoples in a position of serious dependency, locked in overlapping jurisdictions, administrative complexities, and seemingly endless paperwork. But given that this was the only funding on offer and the only way to get access to needed support, Indigenous governments had no choice but to participate.

The situation changed as Indigenous peoples fought for and gained greater recognition of Indigenous and treaty rights and as their negotiations produced greater own-source revenues. The funds came from many directions – resource revenue sharing, specific claims and land claim settlements, Aboriginal economic development corporations, and impact and benefit agreements (IBAs). IBAs are agreements between a resource company and an affected First Nation to provide specific monetary and non-monetary benefits (jobs, training commitments, contract lay-asides) to the First Nations in exchange for the Nations' support of the project.

These revenue streams allowed Indigenous governments to spend their money on their priorities. For some Indigenous governments, this meant that they could fund their own government and administration (chief and councillor salaries, administrative costs, etc.) and cut a vital tie to the government of Canada. Toxic dependency, it turns out, had a solution: Indigenous autonomy.

Moving Forward

Canadians are not yet conditioned to expect good news from and about Indigenous peoples and communities. When Mik'maq-run schools in Nova Scotia started producing impressive outcomes, bringing community graduation rates close to the provincial average (MacDonald 2019), when the Musqueam and Squamish announced plan for more than $2 billion in residential developments (Bula 2019), when a nation-wide Indigenous cultural renaissance produced a rush of Indigenous artistic production, and when multiple First Nations groups announced plans to explore full or partial ownership of the federal government-owned Trans Mountain Expansion Project, the response was more muted. Positive outcomes, it seems, do not fit easily with the dominant Canadian narrative, even when there is a steady stream of impressive developments.

The major achievements – and there have been many more than most people appreciate – are primarily Indigenous rather than governmental. The headlines rarely describe major improvements in child welfare, sharp declines in alcohol and drug abuse, improved living conditions, and the like. Reports on government activities talk about inputs – money for new homes, dependency clinics, training programs, and the like – rather than outcomes. Where there have been significant improvements, as in Indigenous post-secondary participation, gains in local employment, cultural revitalization or the expansion of Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations, the achievements reflect the guidance and leadership of Indigenous communities or, at best, a combination of government financial support and Indigenous effort.

Studies of government programming reveal serious shortcomings in the effectiveness of government initiatives aimed at Indigenous peoples. The Auditor General has, for years, reported on the systematic ineffectiveness of government of Canada services and programs. In the 2018 report on training and workplace preparedness efforts, the Auditor General described a comprehensive failure in oversight, planning and execution (Auditor General of Canada 2018). The government's response, to add extra money to a program marked by widespread ineffectiveness, was precisely the opposite of what is required. Doubling down on failed or poor programs is hardly an approach destined to produce sustainable or improved results.

Staying on the same track would be doubling down on an approach that, at best, simply does not work. Counting on federal government programs and increased spending to produce dramatically different results is perhaps the easiest solution – federal politics, after all, finds its lifeblood in program and funding announcements – but it is far from the best. The developments of the past 20 years are too recent to set right generations of government over-reach and paternalism, and too recent to provide detailed and sustained evidence of major improvements. Multi-generational trauma does not disappear in a few years.

Indigenous communities and governments have insights that can provide a guide to achieving better results in the years ahead. Joe Kalt, co-founder of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, offered a direct and powerful statement:

> True self-government – i.e., the implementation of self-determined collective decisions reflecting each Indigenous community's own values, needs and circumstances, made through and implemented by institutions of self-rule designed and run by that community – is the only policy that has ever worked to reverse the imposed ravages of poverty, social distress, dispossession, and disempowerment. (Kalt 2019).

What Dr. Kalt argues, based on decades of study of American Indian communities, is that the exercise of Indigenous sovereignty creates an essential element for success, providing local control, Indigenous decision-making, autonomy from government, and freedom from the routine of government program funding, applications for funding, and reporting on funding. The soul-destroying, dependency-creating reliance on the federal government has not been a foundation for Indigenous revitalization and socio-economic development.

The 2019 federal budget was seriously well-intentioned. The Trudeau administration wants to improve conditions for Indigenous peoples and communities and has done what governments have done from the 1960s to the present: use money as a surrogate for affection under the belief that government programs and funding are "good things" that advance Indigenous rights and affairs. Make no mistake: money is required. It will take more money, even much more money, to address generations-long problems and challenges. It is not the funding per se that is the problem, but rather the way the money is delivered to Indigenous communities and governments.

There is growing evidence of the effectiveness of another approach: supporting the autonomy of Indigenous communities. The mechanisms for empowering Indigenous peoples are now clear: modern treaties, self-government agreements, special claims settlements, impact and benefit agreements, revenue sharing, and Indigenous economic development. Own-source revenues created and controlled by Indigenous communities through the exercise of their treaty and Aboriginal rights and through their engagement with business, produce freedom from Ottawa and shift responsibility to the Indigenous government. The transition has not been easy and Indigenous communities are wrestling hard with the necessary changes. Being institutionalized into the practices and protocols of Indigenous Affairs has created standards of practice that are not soon set aside.

Key elements of the new approach are in place, at least in part, and in some parts of the country. These include, but are not limited to:

- The co-production of government policy at the federal, Indigenous, territorial, and provincial levels should expand and include close consultations with affected Indigenous communities and organizations;

- Shared financial priority setting is crucial. Governments will not and should not relinquish total control of the purse strings, but they need to ensure that government spending meets the needs of Indigenous communities.

- The annual budgetary ritual of the government of Canada identifying areas of priority and focus – this year, it is rural broadband, for example – should be abandoned in favour of a simple commitment: that all Canadians, including Indigenous peoples, should have a rough equivalence in government-funded infrastructure and public services. The federal government should set a target for achieving this utterly appropriate goal and should report to Parliament annually on its progress toward this objective.

- Indigenous communities and governments should accelerate the negotiation of self-government agreements, under the belief Indigenous communities are ready for such a transition. These agreements must be funded appropriately, based on proven need and subsequent to renegotiation and amendment over time.

- The development of Indigenous governance structures should be supported as requested by Indigenous communities. The re-emergence of traditional Indigenous government systems has shown positive results in many quarters and holds great promise for the future.

- The funding arrangements between Indigenous governments and Ottawa should be revised and reformed, and should shift toward long-term, block funding and away from program and project-based allocations that require extensive applications and complicated reporting. Autonomy requires fiscal autonomy, with the primary accountability being to the Indigenous communities.

- The federal government and Indigenous partners should review and revise the current financial arrangements governing trusts and other Indigenous accounts, with a view to transferring authority to Indigenous groups when they are willing to accept it. Indigenous communities need and deserve access to their money, in a manner consistent with responsibilities borne by the Indigenous population and with the removal of state oversight and control.

- Where appropriate and where desired by the Indigenous communities, serious consideration should be given to working with regional Indigenous groups, organized geographically, culturally, or through existing organizations, like tribal councils. Building administrative economies of scale, whether across all local government requirements or in selected program areas, is important for effective governance, provided that the formation of the administrative units is not done externally and is not imposed by the federal government.

Autonomy, not dependence on government, is the key to Indigenous equality. The central aspiration for Indigenous peoples and governments in the coming decades is to destroy the legacy of the post-World War II era, which ushered in widespread dependency based on increased reliance on government, and replace it with a new order based on Indigenous constitutional, treaty, and legal rights and control by Indigenous peoples and their governments. Where this is occurring in Canada, from Labrador and Nunavut through James Bay to the Nass River valley in British Columbia and in Yukon, Indigenous communities are fostering economic development and are replacing the management of Indigenous poverty with the management of Indigenous prosperity.

A path forward has been identified and Indigenous communities have created their own new trajectory. It is time for the federal government to try to stop solving the challenges facing Indigenous peoples and to focus instead on empowering and supporting Indigenous communities as they assert control over their futures.

About the Authors

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Mr. Paul has a Bachelor of Arts in Community Studies from Cape Breton University in 1980 and received his Master of Public Administration in Financial Management from Dalhousie University in 1982. A strong and dedicated advocate for First Nations, Mr. Paul has worked toward positive change for First Nations communities in diverse policy areas for more than 30 years.

Mr. Paul plays a strategic role in his efforts to liaise between government and First Nations communities. He provides ongoing policy support and advice on First Nations issues in the areas of social wellbeing, health, housing and infrastructure, education, and economic development. His work includes negotiation and advocacy on key priority measures related to the DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans), ISC (Indigenous Services Canada), Health Canada, and other federal agencies.

In 1999, Mr. Paul was a key First Nations advocate in his role as treaty mediator during the implementation of the Marshall decision. Prior to this, Mr. Paul provided consulting and advisory services as Director to the Self Government Secretariat at Health Canada. His current efforts in policy and advocacy are grounded in over ten years' community-level governance and overall management at the Membertou First Nation, where he worked as a band councillor, band planner, and development officer.

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True North in
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"The study by Brian Lee Crowley and Ken Coates is a 'home run'. The analysis by Douglas Bland will make many uncomfortable but it is a wake up call that must be read." former Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin on MLI's project on Aboriginal people and the natural resource economy.

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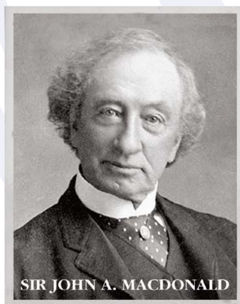
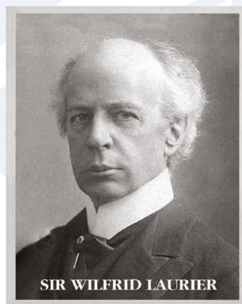
What Is in a Name?

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute exists not merely to burnish the splendid legacy of two towering figures in Canadian history – Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier – but to renew that legacy. A Tory and a Grit, an English speaker and a French speaker – these two men represent the very best of Canada's fine political tradition. As prime minister, each championed the values that led to Canada assuming her place as one of the world's leading democracies. We will continue to vigorously uphold these values, the cornerstones of our nation.


SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD


SIR WILFRID LAURIER

Working for a Better Canada

Good policy doesn't just happen; it requires good ideas, hard work, and being in the right place at the right time. In other words, it requires MLI. We pride ourselves on independence, and accept no funding from the government for our research. If you value our work and if you believe in the possibility of a better Canada, consider making a tax-deductible donation. The Macdonald-Laurier Institute is a registered charity.

Our Issues

The Institute undertakes an impressive program of thought leadership on public policy. Some of the issues we have tackled recently include:

- Aboriginal people and the management of our natural resources;
- Making Canada's justice system more fair and efficient;
- Defending Canada's innovators and creators;
- Controlling government debt at all levels;
- Advancing Canada's interests abroad;
- Ottawa's regulation of foreign investment; and
- How to fix Canadian health care.

True North in
Canadian public policy

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What people are saying about the Macdonald-Laurier Institute

In five short years, the institute has established itself as a steady source of high-quality research and thoughtful policy analysis here in our nation's capital. Inspired by Canada's deep-rooted intellectual tradition of ordered liberty – as exemplified by Macdonald and Laurier – the institute is making unique contributions to federal public policy and discourse. Please accept my best wishes for a memorable anniversary celebration and continued success.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute is an important source of fact and opinion for so many, including me. Everything they tackle is accomplished in great depth and furthers the public policy debate in Canada. Happy Anniversary, this is but the beginning.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PAUL MARTIN

In its mere five years of existence, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, under the erudite Brian Lee Crowley's vibrant leadership, has, through its various publications and public events, forged a reputation for brilliance and originality in areas of vital concern to Canadians: from all aspects of the economy to health care reform, aboriginal affairs, justice, and national security.

BARBARA KAY, NATIONAL POST COLUMNIST

Intelligent and informed debate contributes to a stronger, healthier and more competitive Canadian society. In five short years the Macdonald-Laurier Institute has emerged as a significant and respected voice in the shaping of public policy. On a wide range of issues important to our country's future, Brian Lee Crowley and his team are making a difference.

JOHN MANLEY, CEO COUNCIL