

Straight Talk



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Building resilience against the threat of disinformation

With Michael Weiss

In Canada, we've been slow to recognize the threat of Russian disinformation despite repeated warnings from our national intelligence agencies and those in allied states. In this edition of MLI's *Straight Talk*, we spoke to Michael Weiss from the *Daily Beast* about Russian propaganda, disinformation, and influence operations. This publication is based on a transcript of a recent discussion between MLI Senior Fellow Marcus Kolga and Michael Weiss on an episode of MLI's *Pod Bless Canada* podcast.



Michael Weiss is the Editor-at-Large at the *Daily Beast*. He is the co-author of the *New York Times* bestseller *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*. He is currently working on a book about the history of Russian military intelligence.

MLI: During the COVID pandemic, we've been warned that the Chinese, Russian and Iranian governments are spreading disinformation about the origins of the virus and other myths that could be putting western societies at risk. With the coming US presidential election, there are concerns that the Kremlin and other foreign regimes may try to affect the outcome, again.

And, as a recent report by the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians warned, foreign interference in Canada has received minimal media and academic coverage and is not part of wider public discourse.

Today's guest, Michael Weiss, has been analyzing and writing about disinformation long before the term "fake news" was introduced into the vernacular, when we were still talking about hybrid warfare. Michael is currently the Director of Special Investigations for the Free Russia Foundation and is a senior editor at *The Daily Beast*.

Right off the top, I'd like to get your quick take on some of the revelations published in John Bolton's new book, *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*. Among them that Vladimir Putin compared Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó to 2016 Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton in a call with Donald Trump, which apparently persuaded Trump that he was backing the wrong guy in Venezuela. Any surprises for you from this book?

Michael Weiss:

Well, it's almost too easy, isn't it? I mean, hats off to Putin. He was a KGB case officer and was taught well: how to read people, how to break them down psychologically and also cater to their, shall we say, vices and shortcomings, of which this president does not lack. It's almost absurd, right? That the Venezuelan opposition leader, who is a social democrat, I think, is like Hillary Clinton and that's going to cool Donald Trump's jets when it comes to Maduro and his economic and narco-trafficking crimes. The Russian services are past masters at human intelligence. They really do study the psychology, the emotional vicissitudes of tradecraft in terms of cultivating and running and recruiting.

I wrote a piece for the *New York Review of Books* about a year or two ago, asking how the Russians really see somebody like Donald Trump? You had all of these allegations and speculation that

he had been recruited when he went to Moscow in 1987, and I queried a number of former hands on the Soviet Union and now on Russia at the CIA, one of whom is a kind of a legendary figure called Burton Gerber, who I believe was the director of counter intelligence at Langley during the mid-1980s – at the time of the crisis involving Rick Ames, who had famously spied for the Soviets. Ames worked right under him, in fact. According to Gerber, a guy like Donald Trump would never be recruited by the Russian services; he's too flamboyant, too unpredictable. His manner of speaking, his behaviour, the narcissism, the megalomania, all would have made him the world's worst agent.

But the way you would treat somebody like Donald Trump is somewhere between useful idiot and agent of influence. This is in the grey zone, and unfortunately a lot of the reporting at the height of the Mueller investigation got this wrong. This is not: I'm from the KGB, you work for me now. Instead, it's a game of flattery, a game of gas lighting and manipulation. And I think somebody like Putin has a very easy time dealing with somebody like Donald Trump.

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Am I surprised John Bolton said that Trump is not up the challenge in dealing with the formidable adversary like Putin? No, of course not, but it is worthwhile to hear this from a very dyed in the wool, super conservative hawk, who served for a year and a half as national security advisor and had the ear of the president almost every day of that tenure. Coming from him, it's not quite like coming from the so-called "resistance." It's not like hearing Rachel Maddow. So it's helpful.

Then again, as others have pointed out: day late and a dollar short, John. Where were you during the impeachment investigation? Why didn't you come out sooner and say this? You've got five months till the US election. That election is not going to hinge on anything to do with Russia. It will probably hinge more on the COVID pandemic, the state of the economy, and, as Steve Bannon put it in a very interesting interview with the *Asia Times* last week, on China.

So you can ask me about the other big disclosure in that memoir by Bolton, which is that Trump was basically asking Xi, why don't you do me a solid and buy some soybeans from agrarian swing states, where you can help get me re-elected and then we'll have a wonderful bilateral relationship between the US and China. And that's going to put a damper on Trump's campaign plank, which is that Joe Biden is a hireling of Beijing. I'm more curious, though, to see how this sets the cat among the pigeons with the Breitbart, alt-right, Bannontite wing of the Trump movement. Because Bannon basically says in that interview: I'm doing regime change, I'm working with Chinese opposition groups and Chinese industrialists to overthrow the Communist Party in Beijing. Well there you go. I mean, what now, Mr. President?

MLI: Very good point. Going back to the question of Russian information warfare, you mentioned that they've received a lot of practice. They've been doing this for quite some time. Most people think of information warfare and influence operations as a new phenomenon, a link largely to the last presidential election, but its origins go way back to the Soviet era. So I'm hoping that you can explain for us a bit about this history. What are the similarities in what we're seeing today in the tactics, the strategies, etc.?

Michael Weiss:

Disinformation and propaganda long predate the KGB and the Soviet services. But the KGB really did put a premium on trying to plant bits of falsehoods or half-truths, and getting them circulating in the western bloodstream. And the goal is very simple: to generate skepticism, doubt, conspiracy theories and really divide the West against itself, to allow for this sort of cannibalization of civilization. Your classic "active measures," as they're called, would be to say the CIA invented the AIDS virus as a way to depopulate Africa, which was a very powerful conspiracy theory that to this day has some resonance.

The former CIA officer and head of Russia House, John Cypher, said in an interview recently that he remembers in the 1990s, the President of Zimbabwe getting up and saying that his son or son-in-law had contracted AIDS and this was going to be a very poignant and a seismic moment in Zimbabwean politics. But then he followed up by saying the Americans created this thing, right? So that's a successful active measure, perhaps the most successful one.

Another famous one was the allegation that the CIA – it always comes back to the CIA by the way because that's really the main adversary for the KGB – assassinated John F. Kennedy. So the way this worked is the KGB recruited an Italian journalist to have this

written up in some Italian newspaper, and it worked its way back all the way into the New Orleans prosecutors office and became this set of alternative facts. And it got its fullest expression in popular cultural imagination in the Oliver Stone biopic: JFK, where it was treated as a legitimate claim that the American government assassinated its own president. So, these things have been around for a long time.

Now, the thing that I've noticed in recent years, and even going back to 2015-2016, just as Donald Trump was securing the nomination for the Republican Party before being elected president, more often than not, the intelligence services these days are a bit lazy. What they're good at doing is not inventing whole cloth, these sort of elaborate conspiratorial tapestries, but rather finding idiots, lunatics, ideologues and cranks in the West who are saying these things and then just sticking a megaphone in front of their mouth; basically, amplifying our home-grown nuttiness and feeding it back to us.

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I think I mentioned in my presentation last week for your institute, the only Kremlin or Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) concocted conspiracy theory that I can find that really affected the 2016 election would have been the invention of Seth Rich as the “real” source of the DNC leaks to WikiLeaks. This was reported by Michael Isikoff from Yahoo News, a very good national security reporter. But that's really like the first and only time that I've seen a conspiracy theory come directly from the Kremlin. Usually everything else, whether it's Pizzagate, Hillary Clinton and John Podesta indulging in satanic repast, all of these other things came from the alt-right, Reddit threads and sub-threads, etc.

Now, that's not to say the rather danker precincts of the Internet aren't also infiltrated and penetrated by Russian intelligence organs and operators. There's a very good report that came out by the social media analysis firm Graphika, which examined the Kremlin's *Operation Secondary Infektion*. They don't know which service did this operation – was it the SVR, the Federal Security

Service (FSB), or military intelligence (GRU). But it showed that Russian bots and fake accounts, including burner accounts where you create like an avatar or a Twitter personality and you put up one post and then you delete it; these things are way more rife than we had assumed. But the report also indicated that they're not all that efficacious. They didn't have much of a lasting impact. The point of these things is to go viral, to be picked up and taken as serious and legitimate by mainstream actors.

Now unfortunately, you have the case – and this was in the Mueller report – where a lot of these Russian-run troll bots were often re-tweeted and amplified by none other than US President Donald Trump when he was then candidate for president and his family members such as Donald Trump Jr. Roger Stone had a relationship or a communication stream with Guccifer 2.0, who we now know is just a cut-out for the GRU. And I noticed this with COVID too. As I said last week, it's about finding things in our own backyard, meaning the West's backyard – specifically, the weeds and home-grown pathogens, cycling it back through, like dirty air in an airplane. We keep being forced to countenance things that should be consigned to the margins, but we don't because RT, Sputnik and this cavalcade of semi-anonymous MAGA hat-wearing Twitter accounts keep pushing it back into our consciousness.

Russian intelligence services are exceptionally good at turning tactical defeats into strategic victories.

On the one hand, it's not very sophisticated. It's quite crude. But, on the other hand, the real purpose is oversaturation, right? Russian intelligence services are exceptionally good at turning tactical defeats into strategic victories. My own book that I'm working on, which is a history of the GRU, shows that even when these guys get caught – and the cardinal rule of espionage is don't get caught – they turn it into a kind of playful game, like we didn't really do it. You can't prove it but wink, nudge, we did do it and you know it. And we've just now demonstrated just how vulnerable you are, how porous your society or your national security apparatus is, whether it's trying to hack the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) by actually dispatching cyber operatives to the OPCW, and doing this out of the boot of a rented car

in The Hague. Or, indeed, getting caught and identified by name, rank and date of birth in the Mueller report as Fancy Bear operatives hacking the Democratic National Convention and John Podesta's private e-mail account. It doesn't matter they got caught, the damage was already done.

Of course, you have an added component to it which is the conspiracy theories and counter-factual allegations about these activities. That this isn't true, the US government is lying, or the "Deep State" has made up some rap sheet that doesn't withstand scrutiny. So, unfortunately, it's a lot of white noise, but white noise can be deafening and I think that's kind of the problem that we face in America. I don't know the situation in Canada as well, but you seem to think it's pretty dire there, too.

MLI: No, it's not great. My next question is what's the relationship then with these conspiracy theory blogs and websites. Is somebody coming up with this on their own? You're not saying that there's necessarily a collusion, but what does that look like?

Michael Weiss:

You get it, whether you're aware of it or not, from Kremlin portals or pro-Kremlin outlets. It's very easy for this to come back around and be recycled. The ultimate goal is get it into the mainstream. At that point, the work that's required to retro-engineer where it came from is much more exhausting and painstaking. It's the old saying: a lie can make its way around the world before the truth even gets its boots on. It's very true.

The Russians play this game better than most other countries, but this is now the toolkit of several foreign countries: the Saudis are doing the same thing, the Iranians, the Chinese, the North Koreans. It's hack and release. It's creating fake accounts and avatars all over social media. But if you want to be tutored on how to do it well, study the way the Russians do it.

Let's take the active measure I mentioned about the Kennedy assassination; think about the work that went into that. First, you got to find a reporter, either recruit him as an active agent or just have him be ideologically on side. Maybe he's a fellow traveller back in the day of Soviet communism or he doesn't like the cut of his own government's jib. And then you got to plant the story. That takes time, it takes weeks or months. And then you got to hope that a story in an Italian newspaper gets translated into English and works its way back into the United States where it can do the most amount of damage. These days, any unemployable crank sitting in his mother's basement can write a piece for RT, click

send, tweet it, and then hope that 1001 conspiracy theory websites – whether it’s Zero Hedge, which has just been demonetized by Google, or the Global Research outfit in Canada (I don’t know if they’re like Larouchites or what the hell their story is, but I see them all over the place).

It’s like an infinite regression. You know it starts at Global Research, then it gets picked up by RT and Sputnik, and then maybe Breitbart or the Federalist picks it up, and then Global Research reports on what the Federalist has said. It really is the snake swallowing its own tail. It’s the vitiation of American media literacy and media savvy and consciousness. And unfortunately, there is a legitimate grievance about the way news is packaged and disseminated, and it’s a grievance that not all pro-Trump people are wrong to point out. Of course, they’ve got the diagnosis wrong, and they go way too far with it; Donald Trump is as far away as a competent and credible media critic as they come. But because there is a problem in the way that western reporting is done, the Russian services and their accomplices can seize upon that.

For instance, a factual inaccuracy or a correction posted in the *New York Times* is proof that the *New York Times* is no different from RT and Sputnik. Of course, RT and Sputnik, from the very by-line on down to the skirt of the piece, it’s all just fabrication.

MLI: We know that Putin will be hosting his postponed Victory Day event, I think, next week. That event celebrates the Soviet “liberation” (or more properly occupation) of Eastern Europe. Historical narratives seem to dominate a lot of the sort of Russian and Kremlin disinformation themes and its domestic propaganda. Why is that? What role does history play? And why do they keep going back to history as a theme with disinformation?

Michael Weiss:

Well, I mean, he who controls the past, controls the present. For instance, if you can erase the Hitler-Stalin Pact and all the preliminaries to it, and the very fact that the Soviet arms industry and manufacturing was responsible for keeping the Wehrmacht running right up until *Operation Barbarossa* – if you can erase all of that, then you have created a narrative whereby Moscow has always been fighting fascism. And it doesn’t matter, for instance, that Moscow now hosts neo-Nazi groups, ultra-nationalists, and Eurasian imperialists who hold the same views as the Nazis did about Jews and blacks and gays and so on.

All of this is just propaganda as far as they’re concerned. They emphasize that they won the war, they destroyed Hitler. I see this

from literal Stalinists on Twitter, born in America, running these blogs saying Winston Churchill wasn't responsible for winning World War II. He's no hero, the British didn't do anything; this was all Stalin. False. It doesn't matter, though. It's a tweet and it's going to get a 1001 likes, re-tweets or whatever. And you're going to get these ill-educated millennials born after the Berlin Wall came down, who think that everything that they read in high school or everything that their own government says are lies. It's very important to control the historical narrative and to try and essentially present everything that has followed to this point as some kind of sinister Western design.

That's not to say the United States has not committed human rights abuses, atrocities, war crimes, and the rest of it. It's not to whitewash any of that. It's just to say that the entire thing has been a racket. You have all been conned from day one. And it's not all about presenting Russia well, necessarily. I mean in the case of World War II, it is: Moscow is this great benevolent force that smashed Nazism. But more often than not, the argument is simply about showing that you, your own society, your own culture, your own government is just as corrupt, is just as flawed, is just as black as ours, so please don't lecture us. Don't be moralistic if we decide to lockup gays in Novosibirsk. Don't tell us about invading European soil when you went into Iraq, and so on.

If you don't have a well-educated populous, forget about disinformation and propaganda. The rot runs much deeper.

So again, they're painting with primary colours here, unfortunately, whether it's just the world is getting dumber and more gullible, which I don't think is the case. I just think that back in the 1990s, you had this futurist, utopian vision of what the Internet was going to be. It was going to be this great agora, where people could come and sample from the marketplace of ideas. Everyone was going to be better educated. People were going to have really searching debates with each other, like the dialectic: thesis, antithesis, synthesis. It was going to be brilliant and wonderful. And now, it's guys with frog avatars telling me I belong in an oven and that Hitler didn't go far enough, right? I mean that's the Internet. And you see it on Twitter, which has become even more

of a cesspit than it used to be. Everyone hates Facebook more, at least in my sort of coterie, but Facebook at least is a controlled or regulated environment. I mean, you can kick people out of the party if you don't like them. You can't do that in other platforms.

So again, out of this anarchy, out of this chaos, out of this sort of almost masochistic kind of blood sport, the Russians just kind of spread it all and say oh, we like that. Let's use that. Let's take that. It's smorgasbord. And you're going to have embassy accounts tweeting all kinds of nonsense about anti-Nazism and anti-fascism, but they get dumped on all the time when they do this. And they don't have to do it. Just see the ahistorical claptrap that's being pedalled by Americans all the time about the Cold War, about World War II, about other ancillary events in the 20th century and you weep. If you don't have a well-educated populous, forget about disinformation and propaganda. The rot runs much deeper.

MLI: So we need to ensure that our societies have the media literacy and digital literacy in order to understand what we're looking at. That's probably the primary way that we can defend ourselves and build resilience against this, right?

Michael Weiss:

Yes. And also elections matter – especially when you have the leader of your country (and here I speak only for myself) who is recycling lies that have been, if not concocted, then certainly promoted and sold by hostile foreign intelligence services. It becomes very difficult because there is a top-down phenomenon in the way that news and sort of the zeitgeist works in this country. The president sets the national agenda and the international agenda. If he says NATO is a racket, then a lot of people are going to go along with that and believe it. And it's going to get litigated. Then it's going to be, one side says this, the other side says that.

If Trump believes, for instance, that all of Ukraine is hopelessly corrupt and therefore not in the US interests to help in terms of national security or military deterrents because he's been told that by Putin and Orbán, well then that's going to be litigated and debated. And you're going to have columns saying the president is right, then columns saying no, he's wrong. So again, you complicate things over much when your own commander-and-chief, your own president is an ignoramus and a buffoon, and a dangerous one. And that's the first priority here. Everything else is commentary, as they say.

If Trump is re-elected, and this goes on for another four years, I don't know what's going to be left in terms of a kind of epistemo-

logical infrastructure in this country. I think the level of demoralization is going to be such that people are just going to give up. What's the point? I feel that way on a daily basis. I don't weigh-in to all of these debates anymore because it's completely thankless, exhausting and emotionally depleting.

MLI: So Uri Bezmenov was right, essentially?

Michael Weiss:

He is right. Yeah. I mean those lectures that he gave – you can Google them or look them up on YouTube – the only thing that's really changed is the technological equipment that's been used. But everything else has largely stayed the same.

MLI: With this election coming up in November, from what you're telling me, it sounds like the situation is sort of hopeless.

Michael Weiss:

No, it's not hopeless. I mean, you're not going to get rid of these fever swamps on the Internet just because Joe Biden is president. But again, if I'm in a life raft and I'm drowning and the guy who's handing me a life preserver has said some silly things or maybe he's lost a step or he can't form a coherent sentence, do I just not want to be saved from drowning? And that's the way I see the United States.

There are other positives that are taking place in our society: the Black Lives Matter movement, for instance, which you'll notice that Russian state media has completely denigrated in the most racist fashion. That's the one instance where RT and Sputnik side with American cops over protestors. Why? Because helping to sow racial divisions, if not from mental race war in this country – that would just be a gift to the Russian security establishment, right? Because then there's nothing left of America. America tears itself apart.

But this movement is long overdue. You're seeing things that should have been done a long time ago such as the demolition of Confederate iconography at all levels of society, whether it's statues or especially the military. You're seeing caricatures from Aunt Jemima to Uncle Ben being eradicated. This is probably the one social movement, certainly since I've been alive but probably even before, where public opinion has changed so dramatically and so precipitously, if you look at the polling. There is now an awareness of systemic racism in America. There is now awareness that police forces across the country have been militarized, they

have been behaving with an overweening fashion. They have been targeting particularly young black men for far too long, and there is a great deal of potential for social and cultural progress here.

Now are there excesses? Are there things that you and I would look at and sort of roll our eyes and say well this is ridiculous? Of course, but every social movement contains excesses. And this one is no different. So, I can look at the situation and I can get very pessimistic, but I can also look at it and say, no. If you switch off the Internet, if you switch off these kind of ticker tapes of constant noise, and you just kind of survey the landscape, there is cause for hope here. There are reasons to be optimistic. But fundamentally, it comes down to politics, it comes down to elections. But if Donald Trump does this for another four years, then what hope is there for the bottom up of society? We will be so ground down that nothing is really going to matter, nihilism will be the American way – that's my fear.

In 2014, when Peter Pomerantsev and I wrote that report, *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information*, we were looking mostly through a historical lens. We were really studying Ukraine because, whether it's information operations or cyber-espionage, Ukraine is the laboratory test case for the Kremlin. It always has been. Peter and I, both our views have maybe evolved or shifted since we wrote that report. Peter wrote a second book on propaganda and its uses and abuses all over the world. Myself, I think these things don't work if you get your own house in order. But of course, the task of getting your house in order is far more arduous and time consuming and expensive than creating some quango to say, we have to stop X, Y and Z website, or we have to prevail upon Facebook and Google to de-platform or demonetize X, Y and Z. That's the easy stuff. The hard stuff is what nobody really wants to talk about, but it was what needs to be done.

MLI: That's a long-term proposition, though, isn't it? We're not going to be able to fix any of this before November.

Michael Weiss:

No, and it's going to take generations. There was a good program – I think it was the BBC – on Finland. Now Finland have had their own entanglements with Russia going back not just decades but even longer. But they realized, what do we have to do here to create a historically literate, well-educated and skeptically-minded electorate? Well, we've got to go into kindergartens and elementary schools, and I guess high schools as well, and teach kids how to read. And by that, I don't mean how to put words together and

form word pictures in your mind. I mean how to read the news, how to look at something that's one of your friends posted on social media and think about the argument and also the providence of the argument before they click "like" or re-tweet or whatever. And again, you're talking about things that are going to take a very long time to manifest at the level of social cohesion.

When a TV booker calls me up and asks, did you see the latest report on X? I say, yeah. So what do we do about it? And I say, what do you mean what do we do? Well how do we fix it? Like what do we need? Do we need an executive order? Do we need an act or legislation? My response: all those things are not going to fix the fact that quite a large number of Americans are morons. How do you fix that? That's not a policy that can be switched on and off at a whim. That takes a long time, and it begins probably with financing education and doing a lot of socially progressive things that have been on the agenda but get squashed whenever it comes to the fore. Again, we look for Band Aid measures when there's an emergency or crisis. We don't look for the kind of root cause of it all.

MLI: Right. And this is where we've run into problems in Canada. The government looks at this just through the lens of elections. The election's coming, we have to fix it. The election is done, no more problem. To really fix things, that requires a lot of political will. And finding that, I think, is a bit of a challenge, don't you think?

Michael Weiss:

Well, you know, it's funny. Your former president of Estonia, his favourite line, as we say in Estonia: Hell is north. My line is: the farther east you go, the more west you go. At least up to a point, right? The Baltic States have managed to get a real handle on this. Obviously, it's a very bespoke set of circumstances when you're colonized and occupied by your next door neighbour for decades and people grow up with a sense of longing for their cultural patrimony. And I don't use this term lightly the way its bandied around the American news cycle, resistance when it really means something. It's much easier to put this into the blood stream. It's much easier to get this into the curriculum. This is what the Soviets did to us. This is how Soviet intelligence operations work. This is why we have to be on the lookout for spies and penetrations in our own national security apparatus. This is what an active measure consists of.

Small countries with a history of being having it lorded over them tend to do better at this. I mentioned Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Now there's backsliding, unfortunately, in some of the

Visegrád countries of Central Europe, but that doesn't mean that that core cultural and social element isn't still there. As I've been saying since 2014, this is the one time where America can be the student and not the teacher. Go abroad in search of ways to combat this stuff and talk to the people who we dismissed particularly after 1989 as being alarmist and paranoid when in fact they were just being prescient. To some degree that's happened, but probably not as much as it needed to do.

I'm sorry to say I don't have an answer to the question. I have several answers, and I don't even know that any of them are going to really work. I don't know. Maybe this is just who we are. Maybe this is just like what we have to learn to accept. That's a very dire note to end on.

MLI:

Well, I think you're right. And it goes back to the piece about education and hopefully if the US does go searching for those answers, hopefully they'll take Canada along and help us because God knows, we need it.

Thank you so much for joining us for this chat. It was really great. And do stay safe.



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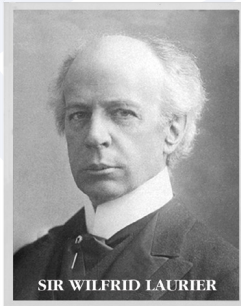
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WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT MLI

The Right Honourable Paul Martin

I want to congratulate the **Macdonald-Laurier Institute** for 10 years of excellent service to Canada. The Institute's commitment to public policy innovation has put them on the cutting edge of many of the country's most pressing policy debates. The Institute works in a persistent and constructive way to present new and insightful ideas about how to best achieve Canada's potential and to produce a better and more just country. Canada is better for the forward-thinking, research-based perspectives that the **Macdonald-Laurier Institute** brings to our most critical issues.

The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould

The **Macdonald-Laurier Institute** has been active in the field of Indigenous public policy, building a fine tradition of working with Indigenous organizations, promoting Indigenous thinkers and encouraging innovative, Indigenous-led solutions to the challenges of 21st century Canada. I congratulate **MLI** on its 10 productive and constructive years and look forward to continuing to learn more about the Institute's fine work in the field.

The Honourable Irwin Cotler

May I congratulate **MLI** for a decade of exemplary leadership on national and international issues. Through high-quality research and analysis, **MLI** has made a significant contribution to Canadian public discourse and policy development. With the global resurgence of authoritarianism and illiberal populism, such work is as timely as it is important. I wish you continued success in the years to come.

The Honourable Pierre Poilievre

The **Macdonald-Laurier Institute** has produced countless works of scholarship that solve today's problems with the wisdom of our political ancestors. If we listen to the **Institute's** advice, we can fulfill Laurier's dream of a country where freedom is its nationality.

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