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Sent: June 5, 2025 12:52 PM

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Subject: Understand the past to fight for Canada's future

Wilmot Township Elected Representatives and Senior Staff:

For your information and consideration, The Globe and Mail editorial below, published February 26/25, is relevant to the Township's current deliberations around the future of the Prime Ministers Path.

By way of this same communication, I hereby request that the Township's Municipal Clerk add this Correspondence to the Public Record.

Brendan Wycks

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Opinion

Understand the past to fight for Canada's future

The Editorial Board

Published February 26, 2025

For Subscribers

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A statue of former Canadian Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald stands on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on June 3, 2021. Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press

The Toronto District School Board, despite the [pleas of historians](#), is removing the name of Sir John A. Macdonald from one of its schools. The board's bad choice could not have come at a worse time.

Our country faces challenges to its future as grave as those that confronted Canada's first prime minister more than a century and a half ago. Macdonald answered by bonding Canadians together in a new dominion.

The writer Pierre Berton called Macdonald's transcontinental railway – forged with blood and brawn and bribes – a national dream. As U.S. President Donald Trump threatens Canada with tariffs and seeks to force us to [surrender our sovereignty](#), we need a new national dream, one worthy of those who came before us.

If this country is worth saving – and of course it is – Canadians should be turning to the example of Sir John A. for inspiration, not seeking to hide his legacy from sight. Yes, he took kickbacks, and blocked non-European immigration, and sought to assimilate First Nations through the residential school system. Macdonald's failures should not be forgotten, but his successes must be remembered, and emulated.

We have let things slide, dangerously, in recent years. Many younger Canadians feel disenfranchised; many are ambivalent about their commitment to Canada. The legacy of lockdowns, inflation, unaffordable housing and a sluggish economy has some of them questioning the country's future along with their own.

According to a [recent Ipsos poll](#), 77 per cent of Canadians between the ages of 18 and 34 agreed with the statement, "I would never vote for Canada to become part of the United States." But 43 per cent said they *would* vote for union if offered "full citizenship and a full conversion of the Canadian dollar and all personal financial assets into U.S. dollars."

So some younger Canadians are absolutely committed to this country, unless they get a really good offer.

(The online survey of 1,000 adult Canadians between Jan. 9 and 13 is accurate to within 3.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Subgroups have a larger margin of error.)

The number of those willing to give up on Canada will only grow if Mr. Trump follows through on his tariff threat. Tiff Macklem, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, [has warned](#) that a prolonged tariff war would permanently damage the Canadian economy.

Grim news, but we've been here before. In 1866, the United States ended a [reciprocity treaty](#) with British North America. Then as now, some Americans thought that the Province of Canada and the Atlantic colonies were benefiting at America's expense. Then as now, some Americans sought to annex Canada, and some Canadians were willing to be annexed.

Then, the United States had ended its civil war with a Union Army of one million experienced fighters, while British North America was practically defenceless. Now, they are the greatest military power the world has ever seen, while Canada is practically defenceless.

How did we respond then? With Confederation, by imposing counter-tariffs on the Americans, and by the monumentally difficult achievement of pushing a transcontinental railroad through thousands of kilometres of muskeg, grasslands and mountains, uniting the country from sea to sea. None of it would have been possible without Macdonald's leadership.

The transcontinental railroad was his greatest passion. That passion made it possible to transport hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Eastern Europe to the Prairies, frustrating American ambitions to occupy the Last Best West.

Macdonald met the big challenges of his time; so have other Canadians, who fought heroically in two world wars, in Korea and in Afghanistan. With our American friends, Canada built a great seaway that opened the heart of a continent to the world.

But the current administration in Washington inhabits a dark place. Once again it wants to throw up tariff walls. Once again, some Americans dream of annexing this country.

Canadians must respond, not just with counter-tariffs, but with a new national vision, with pipelines and power lines and new and expanded terminals and ports, making and mining things, trading with ourselves and with all the world, while defending our sovereignty from any challengers.

John A. Macdonald, with all his faults, dreamed of a Canada that could be. We are that Canada. And we must understand our history if we are to fight for our future.