

The Dangerous Sovereigntist-Nationalist-Separation Movement

By **Monica Guetre**

Although not new to us, the resurgence of protectionist and separation movements all seek to divide intentionally by usurping Canadian rights and freedoms.

The mindset of a sovereigntist-nationalist, whether it's based on language, culture, race, gender, political affiliation or religion, is that there is a sole identity that binds its citizens to a state either within a boundary or across the globe.

The agenda of a sovereigntist government is for full autonomy by possessing full control over affairs within a geographical area. The nationalist will claim to be very proud of their nation and often believes that their nation is better than any other nation. A protectionist uses restrictions on international trade to protect domestic industries.

A sovereigntist's or nationalist's assumption is that people are the same and live the same way they do. Less empathy is a common trait with an inability to walk in another's shoes. Many in this movement are individualistic and self-centred, and the complete opposite of problem solvers, consensus builders, common sense, inclusive, or fair minded. Thankfully, the majority of Canadians are not like this. When you boil it down, these sovereigntists or nationalists band together because they think are superior and have an inherent right to everything. Racists, xenophobia, Fascists, Communists... are all words that come to mind.

This extremist thinking is trying to legitimize in the Prairies. Some provincial politicians think they have an inherent right to what goes on in those existing boundaries. They forget that boundaries change and have over time. Those lines drawn on a map are there in part to benefit all of us, they are not there to separate us. Not one of us has an inherent right to stomp on others. Elected politicians and any other person in a leadership role have an obligation to us all, right across this country regardless of so-called boundaries.

Recently the Alberta UCP Party, led by Danielle Smith, introduced Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act. This party's politicians say it is to fight harmful federal laws and defend the constitutional federal-provincial division of powers. The Bill outlines measures such as giving the province's cabinet (apparently there is an amendment to water this down) the ability to rewrite laws and order government agencies, police, cities and universities to disregard federal legislation that the Alberta government deems unconstitutional or harmful to the province. The question is who protects us from the ruling party when they deem to ignore federal laws?

Following suit, our neighbour just to the west introduced The Saskatchewan First Act saying it is to confirm Saskatchewan's autonomy and exclusive jurisdiction over the exploration for non-renewable natural resources; the development, conservation and management of non-renewable natural and forestry resources; and, the operation of sites and facilities for the generation and production of electrical energy through its natural resources.

Instead, provinces should focus on removing inter-provincial barriers from trade to health-care, education, etc. We need to protect ourselves from provincial and federal politicians bent on ignoring laws – because they happen to not like the answer.

We've already separated provincial and federal jurisdictional power under Canadian law which also includes our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Provinces and Territories have a right to seek remedy in our federal judicial system and some of these court decisions have also benefited these jurisdictions.

Maybe we really need to re-visit this jurisdictional purview as a nation instead of piecemeal. How long has it been for that kind of review?

It looks like the Alberta UCP and Saskatchewan Party Politian's don't like the answers to their questions as the courts have decided we, as a nation, can indeed protect our environment, water and air.

When a politician doesn't have the character to accept a decision that hasn't gone their way is when things get messy, extreme and even dangerous for us all.

We've seen that happen elsewhere over many recorded centuries, and even Canada is not immune. This is when nationalists, separatists, sovereigntists, protectionists come out of the woodwork exposing their life philosophy. We need to learn from past mistakes.

All of us are free to put forward common sense proposals that benefit and even change Canadian law. A politician that doesn't accept the court's decision for the greater good shouldn't be in that leadership role.

Instead of lauding our separateness let's take a step back, take a breath and put it into perspective and do the hard work of long term planning. Our uniqueness is diversity of our people (not the same) and all those magical spaces in between (muskeg, forests, prairies, mountains, and coastlines), nature and the environment, how we connect with each other and our land that we should strive protect now and for future generations.

How do you put a price to protect this with a line on the map?

From my family to yours, have a safe and happy Christmas and New Years.