



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

Joke or not?



Canada, of course, will not become the 51st US state, nor will Justin Trudeau be its "governor." But that will not stop Donald Trump from continuing to talk about the US's northern neighbour this way. Put simply, he benefits from it.

Judging by Fox News **sources** who recounted the details of the conversation between PM Trudeau and Trump and their associates at Mar-a-Lago in Florida on 30 November, there is no doubt that Trump's story that evening about the "51st state" was really a joke.

After all, PM Trudeau said that the meeting with Trump was "excellent." The Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, **commented** on Trump's remarks, saying, "It's a funny comment."

A few days later, Fox News published a detailed account of the conversation, which was not particularly humorous. It led to Trump telling PM Trudeau that Canada should become the US's 51st state if it could not handle 25% US tariffs, which the future president of the US uses as a threat.

The joke at the dinner in Florida—and it really was a joke—became less of a joke as Fox News "amplified" it by using its stars.

"I don't know if Canada is going to go along with it, but there's ways to maybe change their minds. So, Canada, welcome to America, whether you like it or not," said host Jesse Watters, followed by loud laughter from his interlocutors in the studio.

Finally, Trump has attempted to portray the joke from Florida as minimally humorous as possible, with the aim of raising the question: Was he truly joking?

Ten days of silence

Ten days after dinner with Canadians, on Tuesday at midnight, he repeated the stunt on social media, addressing PM Trudeau as "governor" and Canada as the "Great State of Canada," clearly hinting at the attribute that goes with the US federal states.

The ten-day break served a dual purpose in Trump's strategy. He sparked a discussion about whether he was joking or genuinely meant it, then compelled Canadians to address this issue first.

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And secondly, to allow Trump sufficient time to plan his next move—whether to stop or proceed—based on the responses to his bait. If he had chosen the former option, the Mar-a-Lago dinner joke would have been remembered as one of his similar Trumpisms, similar to the one he made in 2019 when he advocated for the US to purchase Greenland from Denmark for strategic reasons.

However, after 10 days of deliberation, the US president-elect decided to repeat the mockery of Canada, thereby elevating the whole matter to a more serious level. His second post on the same topic almost certainly implies a third and many more to come.

Trade is no joke

Cross-border banter between the US and Canada is a serious matter. This is about a potential new trade war between the two big and close neighbours, as Trump has announced that he will impose 25% tariffs on imports of all goods to Mexico and Canada if they do not reduce drug smuggling and the flow of migrants to the US.

After all, PM Trudeau and his associates flew to Florida urgently to personally hear the future US president's intentions first hand.

"We will, as we did eight years ago, respond to unfair tariffs in a number of ways" - Justin Trudeau

"We will, of course, as we did eight years ago, respond to unfair tariffs in a number of ways,

and we're still looking at the right ways to respond," PM Trudeau **said** last Monday, referring to Canada's **response** to Trump's tariffs from his previous term.

As a countermeasure to Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminium imports in 2018, Canada imposed tariffs on all US goods, forcing the then-US president to lift them a year later.

Trump's easy solutions

Threats of import tariffs are now back on Trump's desk as he prepares to take office in January. But more than that, his plans harbour the bitter memory of the blow he received on the same occasion from the Canadians and the same prime minister in the previous term.

Trump's strategy is to achieve the same goal as in 2018 by turning the very serious trade issue between their two closest neighbours and partners into a joke. This time, he employs a somewhat indirect approach.



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His supporters will readily and approvingly accept the joke about vacuuming in Canada as the 51st state of the US, as well as any other easy Trump solution to any complex problem they face.

When the moment comes for the US president to start a trade war with Canada, Trump will have support from a sympathetic public. Even then, they will believe that Canada's

compliance with American tariffs is preferable to its annexation by its powerful southern neighbour.