



THE ALLIANCE FOR
CAPITALIZING
ON CHANGE

Propositions About Canada's National Dream In the 21st Century

by

Ruben Nelson

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1. Canada is not a “natural” country, i.e. our Canadian identity and citizenship does not depend on a shared ethnic history or background. Modern Canada has always been an freely chosen act of imagination and will by whomever has come here and become Canadian.
2. The identity of Canadians has been formed by the interplay of three primary threads:
 - a. Our experience with the land that is Canada. This foundational experience has been at work since the first humans came to Canada some 12,000 years ago.
 - b. Our desire to make a better life for ourselves, our children and grandchildren. This deep personal aspiration has been a major force among Canadians for 200⁺ years.
 - c. Our dream and desire to become and be recognized as a leading industrial nation. This profound desire has been the driving national force for 150 years.
3. Given that (a) and (b) are now relatively invariant, it follows that our future success will be a function of our national dream and desire, specifically:
 - The degree to which we embody and achieve, rather than betray or abandon, our shared national dream.
 - The degree to which our dream of ourselves and what we are striving to become as a people is grounded in and consistent with the emerging realities of the planet.
4. Up until now, virtually all our efforts have gone into reinforcing, extending and modernizing the national dream of being a significant industrial country. The desire to succeed as an Industrial nation has been so deep within us that we have seldom had to refer to this motivation directly. Rather, the speeches of opinion leaders, their programs and our aspirations have all presupposed the dream of being a leading Industrial nation.
 - 4.1 In this light, our shift from MacDonald's National Policy to Mulroney's Free Trade was an attempt to keep the Industrial dream alive. For many, the commitment to sustainable development on the one hand, or globalization on the other, is rooted in the same desire. Even today, every political party bases it policies and programs on the deeper and unspoken appeal – “Vote for us! We will make the Industrial Age work for you!” About this fundamental agenda, both socialists and capitalists agree. Their differences are within, not about, this frame of reference.

- 4.2 In short, we have assumed the appropriateness of the Industrial dream. Virtually no effort has been made to systematically explore the changing conditions of the planet with a view to determining whether or not these conditions will continue to support Industrial societies. The thought that our dream could ever be seriously out of sync with the future has just not been credible to our opinion leaders. **As of today, we have bet our future that there will be no fundamental threat to that future from substantially changed societal conditions.**
5. However, there is increasing evidence that the Industrial Age is drawing to a close; that the Industrial dream is already losing its grip on our imaginations. Put simply, it is slowly dawning on a growing number of Canadians that refining and reinventing the Industrial dream will no longer lead to success. Consider in this light:
- The increasing costs and friction of keeping industrial societies going.
 - The increasing doubts of our citizens that our institutions and their leaders deserve our continued trust and respect.
 - The increasing tensions within political parties about what is to be done, not merely to get elected, but to govern well.
 - The growing number of persons who explicitly reject Industrial logic, metaphors and ambitions.
6. There is also increasing evidence that the new wine of “post-Newtonian” realities is now beginning to burst the still-essentially-Newtonian institutions and practices which permeate and dominate virtually all sectors and institutions of our society. Consider:
- Science is now established as a way of knowing, by persons in a community, which offers only a relative reliability, not certainty.
 - The rise and slow spread of dynamic systems thinking within our society.
 - The now widespread capacity for 2nd order thinking within our society.
 - The widespread recognition in every sector that we must get out of our silos and undertake cross-functional work by cross-functional teams.
 - The acceleration and dissemination of all of the above by new information and communications technologies.
 - The globalizing nature of so much societal change.
- 6.1 In short, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the new post-Newtonian understandings and conditions which have arisen in the 20th Century will “go critical” and become dominant in the 21st.
7. **We conclude that no variant of the Industrial dream, a dream that has served us well up until now, will carry Canadians to the future we desire.** Taken together the new understandings entail a fundamental rethinking of authority and, therefore, of all our organizational structures and all of our relationships, including those to ourselves, one another and nature. In this light, the assertion that we face the end of the Industrial Age in the 21st Century is not a wild supposition, but a virtual certainty. A further point, one that is not yet widely understood, is that we are being driven into new ways of living primarily by the success, not the failure, of Industrial understandings and practices.

8. Yet, as of today, Canadians are still trying to extend the Industrial dream. Most of our energy in Canada is still devoted to the project of becoming a more creative, innovative and global Industrial society.
 - 8.1 A small number of those who are alive to the damage done Industrial practices claim that the void created by the loss of faith in the Industrial dream can be filled by a renewed faith in the ways and wisdom of tribal or traditional cultures. However, while this move is psychologically understandable, it is no more grounded in the emerging realities of the 21st Century than is the Industrial dream. The harsh reality is that no existing way of living, not tribal, traditional or industrial, can be successfully scaled to include six billion persons.
9. **We conclude, that if Canada is to succeed in the 21st Century, we require a new imagination of our times and a new dream of our future – one which is as deeply aligned with the actual emerging conditions of the 21st Century as the Industrial dream was aligned with the emerging conditions of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries.** The time has come to re-conceive our national dream in order to allow us to fulfil our long-standing desire for a better life for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren. This is the new deep work which faces Canada and Canadians. We need to embrace it and learn to live it.
10. Happily, there is a grounded way to frame the societal changes in the midst of which we now find ourselves – **we are living within a long transformation to truly post-Industrial societies and ways of living.**
 - 10.1 Happily, this way of framing our situation leads to an exciting new national dream – **Canada can become the first country in the world to openly and thoroughly commit to a post-Industrial path to the future.**
 - 10.2 Happily, **such a commitment would serve us and serve the world.** By making it we can:
 - Ensure a better future for present and future Canadians.
 - Become the most influential small nation of the 21st Century.
11. In order to make the transition from where we are to what we need to become, we need to understand each of the above propositions and its implications for our future in much greater depth. Reliable understandings of this moment of history, its hidden threats and opportunities, are a prerequisite to our being able to put together, let alone successfully execute, a coherent program for becoming a post-Industrial nation and having this journey to the future openly and willingly accepted by a critical mass of Canadians.
12. The Alliance for Capitalizing on Change is committed to finding and working with others who share the essential views expressed by these propositions. We invite and welcome your comments, additions, critiques and energy.

NOTE: The Alliance for Capitalizing in Change was absorbed into Foresight Canada in 2009.