

Trump tariffs 'made something snap in us' - many Canadians see US rift beyond repair

23 hours ago **Nadine Yousif**
BBC News, Toronto

Watch: 'I'm getting angry and anti-American' - Canadians on tariff threat

After US President Donald Trump threatened Canada with steep tariffs, Monika Morelli from Montreal cancelled her subscriptions to Netflix and Amazon, two giant American companies.

She also called off a trip that she had planned for later in the year to New Orleans.

"There is something that has been irrevocably broken now, after centuries of the US and Canada being allies," Ms Morelli, 39, told the BBC.

The threaten of import taxes, she said, plus Trump's remarks that Canada could become the 51st US state, "have made something snap in us all".

Trump had vowed to slap a 25% tariff on both Canada and Mexico this week, citing issues with border security.

He then struck a surprise deal with Mexico on Monday that resulted in the duties being delayed for 30 days in exchange for more Mexican troops at the border. A similar deal was agreed with Canada later in the day.

For Canadians, who had been deeply anxious about the economic consequences of the tariffs, the delay elicited a sigh of relief. But some feel the threat has caused a rift in the US-Canada relationship.

Data released on Wednesday by national pollster Angus Reid found that 91% of Canadians want their country to rely less on the US in the future, preferring that option over repairing the US-Canada relationship, though more than half still wanted to try. The opinion survey also noted a big jump in national pride, and found that 90% of Canadians were following this issue closely, mimicking engagement levels not seen since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Shachi Kurl, president of Angus Reid, told the BBC the numbers capture "a moment of unity" in the country. They also showed that Canadians have responded to the US tariffs with a shared sense of anger, she said.

With the US being the largest customer for Canadian goods, the tariffs threaten to push the Canadian economy into a recession and put thousands of jobs at risk.

In addition to the tariffs, Trump has stated repeatedly (possibly as a joke) that Canada should instead become a US state to avoid paying the levy - a remark that has been met with fury from Canadians, and has been seen by some as a threat to their sovereignty.

Getty Images

Asign at a liquor store in British Columbia urging shoppers to buy Canadian goods instead of US-made products

The issue has made way for a surge of patriotism in Canada - notably uniting people from all political stripes at a time when the country had been deeply divided over the leadership of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his policies.

A "Buy Canadian" sentiment has been pushed by politicians and the general public, with shoppers wanting to support local businesses and avoid purchasing US-made products in protest over the potential tariffs.

Carole Chandler, a 67-year-old retired public school teacher from Halifax, said that she, like Ms Morelli, had cancelled an upcoming holiday to Florida.

"I love America and Americans," she tells the BBC. "But I don't want to be one."

Even with the temporary pause on tariffs, some Canadian provinces are still pushing ahead with "Buy Local" campaigns to encourage people to spend their dollars closer to home.

On Wednesday, Manitoba's premier Wab Kinew said his province will be spending C\$140,000 (\$97,800; £78,200) on advertising - including on billboards and radio - to push Manitobans to contribute to their local economy.

Provinces are also removing barriers to trade internally within Canada, and many are calling for the country to diversify its

trade relationship and build ties elsewhere.

Kinew described the back and forth on the potential tariff war between the US and Canada as akin to "whiplash".

"But through it all, to see people come together and to rally around the flag, to put the Manitoba pride first and foremost, has been very encouraging," Kinew said.

Ms Kurl noted that the Canada-US relationship has endured for centuries, and the two countries have long been close allies and partners on the world stage.

"It's quite an enmeshed relationship," she said.

Canadians share not only deep economic ties with the US, but also familial bonds and the world's longest land border. The US has also long been the top travel destination for Canadians.

She said it would not be easy to untangle those ties, and it remains to be seen whether the recent sentiments over Trump's tariffs signal a fundamental shift between the two countries.

A lot of it, she added, could depend on how the relationship with the current US president progresses, and whether the tariff threat materialises.

As Canadians wait and see what happens, they said they were looking to support their own however they can.

"We don't put on big displays like Americans do," said Ms Chandler from Halifax.

But Canadian patriotism runs deep, she said.

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