

Building a Stronger Dominion: A Mission for Canadian Renewal

The Canadian Moment

As the U.S. venture capital community rallies around "American Dynamism" – supporting tech startups that tackle national challenges – Canada faces its own pivotal moment. Rising geopolitical tensions, shifting global economics, and the race for technological sovereignty demand a distinctly Canadian response.

This mission centers on two pillars that can drive a secure and prosperous Canadian future: **Talent** (mobilizing our people) and **Energy** (leveraging our power). This isn't about copying American ideas, but capturing Canadian strengths while addressing our weaknesses. It's pragmatic yet aspirational – a "Building a Better Dominion" vision for national resilience.

Pillar 1: Talent – Reclaiming Canada's Innovators

Reversing the Brain Drain

Canadian universities produce world-class talent, yet we lose our best to Silicon Valley where salaries are 1.5-2x higher. A thriving defense-tech sector would give ambitious engineers compelling reasons to stay – or return – by offering mission-driven work on AI, cyber defense, space, and advanced hardware from Toronto instead of San Francisco.

Empowering Defense and Hard Tech Founders

While Canadian VCs traditionally favor safer bets like SaaS or fintech, defense and hardware startups face higher hurdles: longer R&D cycles, complex procurement, and cultural stigma. Yet Canada has incredible momentum – our startups made more applications to NATO's innovation accelerator (DIANA) than any other country in its first cohort.

We need specialized accelerators like the U.S. AFWERX, streamlined procurement, and government as an early customer. When our brightest founders see support for building in Canada first, they will.

Building "Dual Fluency" Talent

Canada needs bridge-builders fluent in both technology and defense/government languages. These hybrid professionals – perhaps reservists with CS backgrounds or aerospace engineers consulting with the Air Force – form the connective tissue between tech and national security. Exchange programs, education pathways combining engineering with security studies, and respect between uniformed and civilian innovators will cultivate this crucial community.

Evolving Ontario's Manufacturing Base

Southern Ontario's automotive and manufacturing heritage is a tremendous asset. The region is already evolving – Volkswagen's C\$20 billion EV battery gigafactory in St. Thomas will create 3,000 direct jobs and position Ontario as a key EV supply chain node.

Apply this same approach to defense manufacturing: Ontario's factories could produce next-generation military equipment, from electric armored vehicles to satellite components. The mechanical engineer in Windsor should envision designing the next military EV, not just the next sedan.

Finding Canada's Defense Tech Champion

Canada needs its own Palmer Luckey – not to idolize individuals, but to inspire a generation. Success stories breed more success. When one bold founder shows it's possible to build cutting-edge defense tech on Canadian soil, dozens will follow.

This requires strengthening the funding ecosystem (Canada lacks dedicated defense venture funds or an In-Q-Tel equivalent) and celebrating our innovators. Few Canadians know about Reaction Dynamics (Montreal rockets) or MDA's world-class work. Highlighting these stories can inspire the next generation.

Pillar 2: Energy – Powering Canada's Future

Energy Security as National Security

Energy underpins everything – our economy, comfort, and military readiness. For resource-rich Canada, this represents both strategic advantage and responsibility. By harnessing our resources and engineering prowess, we achieve dual goals: economic strength through development/exports and strategic autonomy by reducing foreign dependencies.

Critical Minerals Advantage

Critical minerals are the new oil. Canada is the only Western Hemisphere nation with all minerals needed for EV batteries and a top-3 U.S. supplier of many critical materials. Recent analysis suggests Canada could build the world's #1 battery supply chain, overtaking China.

Success requires fast-tracking responsible mining projects, building domestic refining capacity, and incentivizing downstream manufacturing to capture the full value chain. The security imperative is clear: these minerals are vital for defense technologies, yet the world currently relies on China. By developing our capacity, Canada can supply ourselves and allies while reducing geopolitical dependencies.

The Nuclear Edge

Ontario derives ~60% of its electricity from nuclear and is now leading with Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). The Darlington SMR project – the first grid-scale SMR in the G7 – will

connect 300 MW by 2030, with four reactors ultimately providing 1,200 MW of carbon-free energy.

This creates 18,000 construction jobs, adds \$35 billion to Ontario's GDP, and sparks revival in nuclear engineering. SMRs hit multiple goals: decarbonizing our grid, ensuring energy independence (using Canadian uranium), creating a high-skilled industrial base, and opening export opportunities. Success domestically positions Canadian firms to export SMR technology worldwide.

Holistic Energy Strategy

Energy security encompasses our entire resource base. While transitioning to clean energy, our petroleum sector can fund innovation in carbon capture and hydrogen. Our vast hydroelectric capacity attracts energy-intensive industries with clean power.

The key is treating energy as strategic. A country with plentiful, affordable, clean energy can power industries, maintain prosperity, and support its military. This means hardening infrastructure against threats, maintaining strategic reserves, and developing exportable expertise in areas like battery recycling and portable military power systems.

From Vision to Action

Talent and Energy create a reinforcing loop: cutting-edge energy projects attract talent and give Canada a reputation for building big things, while strong human capital spurs innovation in energy and resources.

Key Initiatives

Reverse Brain Drain Program: Partner with Canadian tech hubs to identify and recruit expatriate talent through competitive roles, research positions, and startup funding for defense and critical industries.

Defense Innovation Network: Establish a Canadian Defense Technology Accelerator providing funding, mentorship from military/industry veterans, and fast-track DND access. Coupled with a government venture fund, this could seed dozens of companies over 5-10 years.

Cultural Narrative Shift: Champion the message that building defense and hard tech is patriotic and future-oriented. Building physical things – fighter jets, nuclear plants, AI software – secures our living standards and sovereignty.

Policy Alignment:

- Streamline procurement to enable SMEs to sell to government efficiently
- Ensure Industrial and Technological Benefits from defense purchases reach Canadian startups

- Provide regulatory certainty for mining and nuclear projects with clear, efficient approval processes

Local Focus, National Impact: Start in Toronto/Ontario – Canada's business and tech powerhouse with a pivotal manufacturing base. Success here (first SMR, battery plants) creates models for nationwide replication.

The Mission

This is about becoming a connector and champion – connecting talent to opportunities, capital to projects, and advancing the narrative that Canada can and must build important things. The next generation of Canadians should be able to work on breakthrough technologies without leaving the country.

Canada faces real challenges – from Arctic security to energy grid stability to AI capabilities. But with focused investment in Talent and Energy, we can usher in a new era of Canadian dynamism where Canada punches above its weight in securing a better future for itself and allies.