



Creating a Dream for Canada

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Canada is one of the most admired and envied countries in the world, topping the Reputation Institute's annual survey of most reputable countries.¹ It is a country seen as distinctly different from our neighbor to the south—described by the late Peter Ustinov as “America run by the Swiss”. The world has great respect for Canada's nuanced and successful approach to gun control, international wars and terrorism, refugees and immigration, multicultural tolerance, banking, healthcare, education, the social safety net and peacekeeping. In many ways, Canada is the country that many others wish they were.

Even so, Canadians have less respect for their democratic political institutions than many others. Canadians are more disenchanted with politicians than at any time since polls have been measuring this question. In 1965, for example, 49% of Canadians thought that “the government does not care what the people think”. By 1979 this proportion had grown to 53%, by 1984 to 63% and by 1990 to 70%.² The level of rhetoric and bombast in the media about politicians and politics has risen to match the decline of civility in the House of Commons.

And there we may have both a definition of the problem as well as the solution.

Most Canadians would say today, that Canada's political system is in need (at the very least) of an image redo. A minority of the population invests the time to study and reflect on issues, and assess the political condition through a calm discernment of facts, knowing that they can't have everything they want, and certainly not without paying for it, or making some trade-offs, either. But the majority doesn't think this way. They are looking for *leadership*, and they yearn for—and deserve—a higher standard of national leadership than they typically see around them today.

Canada's elected leaders are in the best position to improve this condition—if they have the will. We can—and should—reverse the general trend of declining confidence in political leadership.

We can start this transformation by creating a dream.

¹ Reputation Institute, <https://www.reputationinstitute.com/research/Country-RepTrak>

² André Blais and Elisabeth Gidengil, *Making Representative Democracy Work: The Views of Canadians*, Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, Collected Research Studies, vol. 17, Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1991, p. 35.



What is the unifying experience that winning teams, great endeavors, and extraordinary achievements have in common? What is the unique characteristic shared by people who achieve the extraordinary—creating revolutions, overthrowing despots, founding nations, climbing Everest, reinventing organizations, making breakthroughs, or changing the way we live or think?

Each of these is powered by the passion of a dream.

Over the last 50 years, we have expanded our capacity to quantify, measure, and analyze. But we have stifled our capacity to dream. The conventional wisdom in politics (and business) is that dreaming is too “out there,” so we no longer talk about it in an organizational context. Instead, we create mission, vision, and values statements and other consultant-speak platitudes. But these feel stale and barren compared to the inspiring power of a dream. The reality of our current condition is that Canadians are in danger of losing a once-cherished national dream.

How did we land a man on the moon? John Kennedy had a dream that millions embraced, making it their own and making it real. Indeed, the dream was so powerful that it restored America’s self-esteem after the launch of Sputnik, galvanized the nation, and inspired much of the rest of the world. Dreams are like that. They transcend differences, disagreements, and petty arguments and engage us in a higher purpose, uniting us as one. It is this elusive oneness for which we yearn. Dreams are almost unique in their power to achieve oneness.

Great historical leaders—Christ, Buddha, Lao-Tzu, Confucius, Mohammed, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King, Jr., among them—all knew the impact a dream can have. In his famous 1963 speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, King repeated the phrase “I have a dream” eight times. His ability to articulate his dream united and inspired hundreds of thousands of people to usher in a new era in civil rights.

That is the power of dreams—the power to change the world.

I have [personally instituted](#) the transformational concept of [ONE Dream®](#) within organizations and for cities and states. We have [seen these organizations](#) harness the power of the dream to galvanize the passion of their respective constituents.³

In the 1960’s, my close friend, the late Don Watt, [designed the Canadian flag](#) for Lester Pearson, and all Canadians—and a surge of Canadian self-esteem followed. I wish to offer our [methodology](#) to Canada to achieve the same, by creating a dream for Canada that will not only inspire Canadians, but the rest of the world too.

³ See this ONEDream® Case Study and White Paper: <http://tinyurl.com/z5tdlng>