

Editorial ? There's good reason for Canadians to celebrate

A lot has happened since 1867, but seldom has there been a time like today for Canadians to celebrate. In this week's issue of the Orangeville Sun 150 years ago, editor John Foley invited the community to get out and celebrate 'Dominion Day,' although the term more generally used then was Confederation Day. Both terms have long since faded into disuse, but we find it interesting that our politicians convinced their British colleagues to call the country formed by the British North America Act the Dominion of Canada rather than something like the United Colonies of Canada. After all, the BNA Act did not create a nation with 'dominion also from sea to sea' (as the King James version of the Bible put it), but merely created a country with four provinces (Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick). But clearly there was an aspiration, which was realized four years later with the entry of British Columbia. Interestingly, papers of the day suggest there were few celebrations of the 50th anniversary, thanks to the fact that in 1917 we were mired in a seemingly endless world war. And even the Centenary in 1967 was marred by a separatist movement in Quebec aided somewhat by a visit of French President Charles De Gaulle and his shouting, 'Vive le Québec libre,' that June. Today, Canada is surely more unified than it was 50 years ago, perhaps thanks in part to the fact the country has had four Quebecers as prime ministers in 40 of those 50 years (Pierre Trudeau, Brian Mulroney, Jean Chrétien and now Justin Trudeau). And our political climate these days is far calmer than just about anywhere else in the world, to the point where we see the current federal government getting help from two (Progressive) Conservative prime ministers - Mulroney for the pending trade negotiations with the Trump administration, and Kim Campbell to head up the selection process for Supreme Court of Canada judges. Although we have two strong opposition parties in the Conservatives and New Democrats, the issues being raised must seem relatively petty by comparison with those in both Britain and the United States, thanks to Brexit and the conduct of both Donald Trump in the White House and the Republicans in Congress. There surely is cause for celebration in the fact Canadians have enjoyed a publicly funded universal health care system for nearly half a century and now witness the spectre of a Republican version of health care that will see 22 million lose affordable health insurance while that country's wealthiest enjoy huge tax cuts. And as we see it, there's just as much cause to celebrate Canada's success in bringing in at least 40,000 refugees from the Middle East at a time when the door has been slammed shut to them south of the border on the specious grounds that some terrorists might pose as refugees and gain entry to the U.S. despite the most thorough vetting processes imaginable. Another cause for celebration is our possession of a judicial system that should be the envy of the world. We could not imagine the Supreme Court of Canada ever doing anything like what the Republican-dominated U.S. Supreme Court did this week, in sanctioning a travel ban imposed by presidential edict, despite the excuse for it having long disappeared. The edict barring admission to the U.S. of residents of six mainly Muslim countries was supposedly designed to give the Trump administration time to improve vetting procedures for both ordinary visitors and refugees. The travel ban was to last 90 days and the ban on refugees 120 days, ending May 27. The court ruling has now sanctioned bans lasting at least another three months. Could anything of the sort happen here? We surely hope not.