

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? He?s repeating a Harper mistake

It was American author/comedian John Green who quipped: ?I figured something out. The future is unpredictable.?

That being said, however, some future events are obvious, one of which is that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and about-to-be-inaugurated U.S. President Donald Trump will never be pals.

But then again, when it comes to business, political or otherwise, you don't really have to be best buddies to wheel and deal.

It is wise, however, to avoid openly antagonizing somebody who, like it or not, is a critical part of your own failure or success.

Which is why, it says here, that Trudeau is making a rookie mistake by skipping Trump's inauguration, and why he should tell his left-leaning cabinet ministers and backbenchers to stop demonizing Trump.

Fact is, despite the fact that liberals throughout the world are appalled ? after all, he doesn't accept their sacred shibboleths, and worse, doesn't care if it offends them ? Trump won the election and is about to become head of Canada's (and the world's) most important trading country.

Best to at least attempt to get along.

Which doesn't mean bowing down in worship ? as liberals tended to do with Barack Obama ? but it does mean knocking off the Hitler comparisons (which are not only the height of foolish hyperbole, but serve only to diminish the true horror of Hitler, Stalin, et al) and getting down to the serious business of trying to do what's best for Canada in our dealings with our number one trading partner.

Trudeau may indeed be the darling of Hollywood liberals and their ilk everywhere, which makes him the epitome of everything Trump campaigned against.

But Trump, first and foremost, is a businessman, and he understands the importance of the immense two-way trade between our two countries.

Stephen Harper and Obama were in the same category. They didn't like each other either. And Harper's open hostility proved not to be a wise move. Witness Obama's killing of the Keystone pipeline as Exhibit A. (A move, by the way, which Trump is certain to reverse as quickly as he can.)

It is true that the Americans are the Goliath in this relationship ? and we're the David, although he did rather well in the end ? but Trump understands how to read statistics and will know that Canada, despite our comparative size, is the American's second largest trade partner (behind the European Union), accounting for nearly nine million American jobs.

It is true they have an even bigger impact upon our overall economy, but the status of our relationship gives us more bargaining chips than most countries who have to deal with them.

Indeed, in 2015, the U.S. imported \$325.4 billion worth of goods and services from Canada, and Canada exported \$337.3 billion from the U.S., making us their largest single customer, something that will not be lost on Trump, no matter how he views our hug-for-hire prime minister.

Trump, as you know, is hell-bent on reviving the fossil fuel industry which, despite its incredible importance to their country (and ours) was treated as a leper would be by Obama and his crowd. He's also going to make huge changes ? maybe even tear up ? NAFTA and other trade deals and he sure won't be imposing a carbon tax as Kathleen Wynne just did and Trudeau soon will, making us even less competitive, particularly given the other reality that Trump will absolutely slash business taxes, a sure-fire invitation to Canadian (particularly Ontarian) manufacturers to escape high taxes and Wynne-inspired energy costs and move south of the border.

All of which means that Trudeau and his gang have to forget their personal feelings about Trump ? valid or not ? and make sure we get a seat at the table to avoid being crushed when, as Trudeau's father Pierre once famously said, the elephant next door decides to roll over.

Trudeau seems to have lots of time to flit around the world meeting and greeting ? and taking shirtless selfies ? with the artsy-fartsy crowd and other assorted liberals elsewhere. But somehow he can't find the time to spend a day in Washington witnessing Trump's swearing-in ceremony and signalling to the new president directly that we're ready to sit down and do business.

It is true that Harper made the same mistake, finding himself elsewhere during Obama's swearing-in, and that didn't work out particularly well for our benefit.

You'd think Trudeau would have learned something from that, but apparently not. Pity.

