



Statement on Coronavirus in Canada

March 23, 2020

Unintended Consequences: For Canadians, this is the most intense and existential lesson in how federalism works, how the constitution works, what everybody does and how they do it. It certainly isn't worth people dying. But, people are learning in a non-rhetorical way on the one side about our role as citizens, and on the other side about the role of everybody in public life. Federalism is a really complicated system.

The rhetoric out there for decades has been that we need strong leadership, as if a Napoleon or even a Mussolini could solve our problems. Suddenly, we're having to understand and act based on how it really works. And I have to say, the politicians at all three levels have been very good and are getting better each day at explaining what is happening, and precisely what they are doing.

It's funny, but as many of the mechanisms of unlimited individualism are being turned around into the mechanisms of citizen and governmental responsibility, we are all having to absorb how our actions can serve the public good.

Great crises can either lead to the worst of dogmatism and power, or to a remarkable clarification of our role as citizens and the precise role of every level of government.