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The view from Regina

Presented by

Brad Wall, National Post

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Sir John A. Macdonald once said: "Canada is a difficult country to govern." He said difficult, but not impossible. In the same era, Abraham Lincoln, in the midst of a much greater crisis than anything we face today, said: "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present We must rise with the occasion We must disenthral ourselves."

The words of these two 19th-century giants can provide us much perspective with news of yesterday's prorogation of Parliament.

We have now stepped back from the precipice and are taking a collective breath. Now is the time for our national political leaders to rise to the occasion. If there ever was a time in our nation's history to disenthral, it is now.

There is much that should encourage us. What has been lost in the furor of these last days is the important progress that is being made by provinces and the federal government with respect to the economic challenges facing the country.

Canadians need to know that there is agreement from the corners of our confederation on the need for accelerated infrastructure investment. There is agreement on the steps the federal and provincial governments have taken to help secure the financial institutions they regulate. There is agreement for continued federal vigilance to ensure the liquidity of our markets and a level playing field for our financial institutions competing with banks abroad. There is agreement that we must take steps to ensure that aboriginal people in Canada have access to the education they need to fully engage in the economy. The successful resolution of the labour shortage that exists in my province depends on it.

Yes there are some areas where agreement has eluded the country. There are divisions on the issue of sector bail-outs as part of any stimulus. There remains work to do on the issue of potential improvements to employment insurance. And there are other ideas that will no doubt be explored during the Finance Ministers' meeting in Saskatoon later this month and by the premiers and Prime Minister in January.

The way forward will not be found down the path of political instability. It will not be found through a power grab by an ill-considered coalition. Nor will it be found by those whose primary motivation is to destroy their political opponents.

These things can only be achieved if our national leaders listen to what Canadians are telling them -- that both the

government and the opposition must put down their talking points, understand that Canadians deserve better and start acting accordingly.

My intention is not to over-simplify our challenges. Let us note, however, that there is actually more consensus than contention about the solutions we need. Our differences are relatively meagre. Let us disenthral ourselves, get to work and blaze the way forward.

Now is the time for women and men of goodwill who have been called to leadership to make it happen.

-Brad Wall is the Premier of Saskatchewan.

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