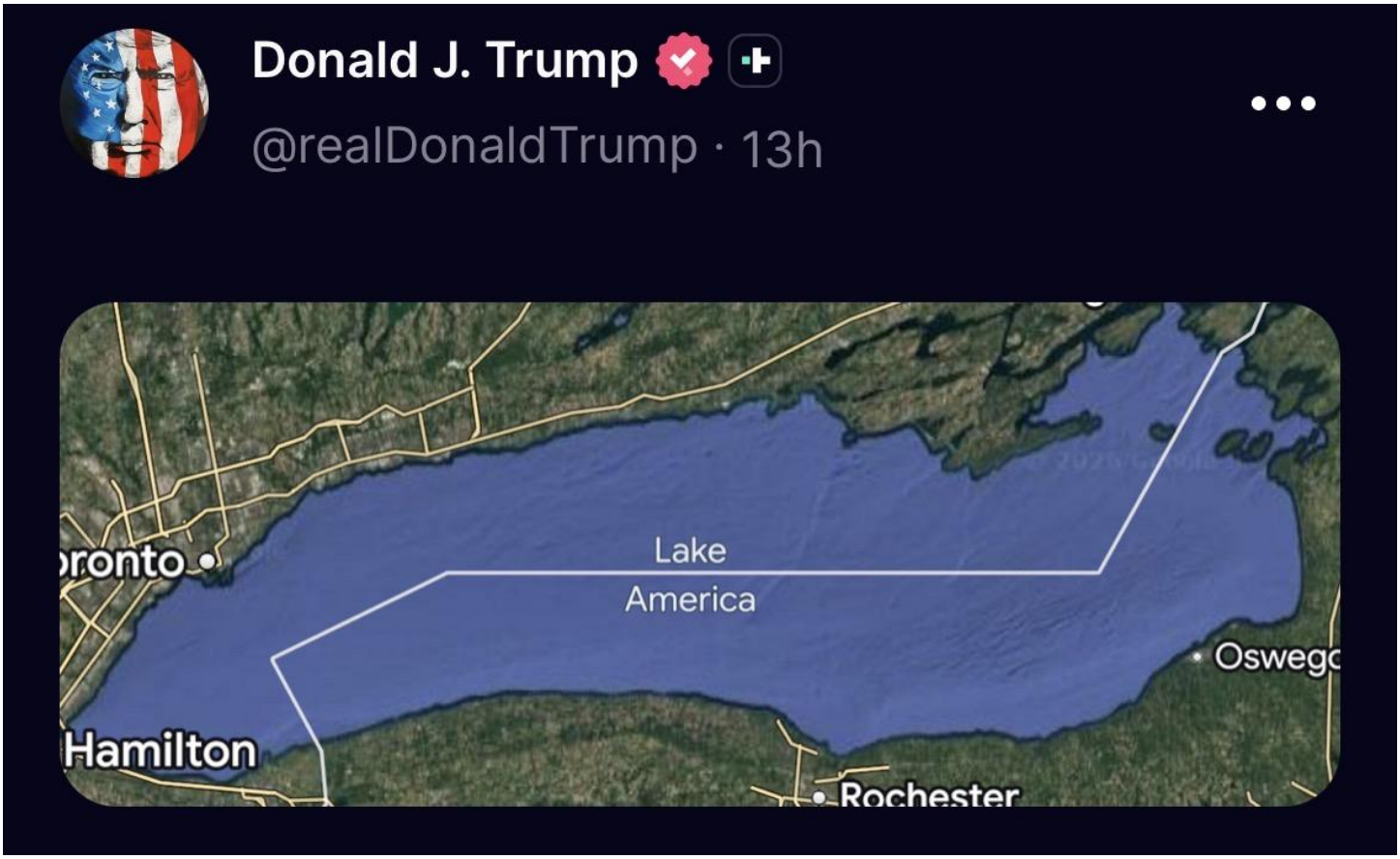

September 2026

Dear Students,

Hello from the shores of Lake Ontario!

I hope you have had a wonderful summer and are ready to jump back into the school year. We live in extraordinary times, and I am excited to explore them with you. Regardless of the courses I will be teaching this semester—Canadian History, Genocide, and World History—there are some local and world events that we will focus on:

- Canada and the United States are in the midst of an extraordinary trade war that is making international headlines. Our prime minister, Mark Carney, has taken a leadership role since his famous speech in Davos, Switzerland, last January, where he declared, "We are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition," with regard to the behaviour of the U.S. government in the world. This trade war is having a dramatic and negative effect on Canada's economy, and that impact will increase as our semester begins. What happens to Canada once its closest economic and political ally becomes an adversary?

  In a bizarre moment, U.S. President Donald Trump changed the name of Lake Ontario to "Lake America" for all agencies of the U.S. government. Google has now made the change for all U.S. users. What does this tell us about power, identity, and colonialism?

- The United States is also involved in a war against the Iranian government. The global economic cost of the war in Iran has reached an estimated hundreds of billions of dollars in direct military and energy burdens, with broader global GDP losses projected between US$1.3 trillion and US$3.5 trillion, depending on the duration of regional disruptions. How will this conflict be resolved, and what will be its impacts on Iran, the United States, and the world?

    - The United States midterm elections are scheduled to take place on Tuesday, November 3, 2026. Currently the Republican Party (headed by President Donald Trump) controls the Congress and the Senate. However, all 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and 35 seats in the U.S. Senate are being contested. The results will serve as a direct metric of public support for Trump's political movement. A strong Republican showing would cement his status as the party's ultimate kingmaker, while a wave of Democratic wins would signal a shift in political momentum and stall many of the President's initiatives (and open him to investigations).

- The economic balance of power in the world is shifting back toward Asia, with China and India emerging as the next global superpowers. The Silk Road, a network of trade routes stretching across the Asian supercontinent, is reasserting itself as the most important political, economic, cultural, and social space on the planet. What does this mean for Canada and the rest of the world?

- The Quebec provincial election will be held on Monday, October 5, 2026. The separatist Parti Québécois (PQ), led by Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, is currently leading in the polls and is favoured to win. A PQ victory would put Quebec sovereignty back on the table. However, the party has stated that it will delay any independence referendum until at least 2029, after U.S. President Donald Trump leaves office. What is at stake for the Canadian federation? How could this election impact the upcoming referendum in Alberta?

- On October 19, the province of Alberta will hold a referendum asking the following question:

> **Should Alberta remain a province of Canada, or should the Government of Alberta commence the legal process required under the Canadian Constitution to hold a binding provincial referendum on whether or not Alberta should separate from Canada?**
>
> **Option 1:** Alberta should remain a province of Canada.
>
> **Option 2:** The Government of Alberta should commence the legal process required under the Canadian Constitution to hold a binding provincial referendum on whether or not Alberta should separate from Canada.

What would be the repercussions if "Option 2" were selected by the people of Alberta? What happens if the U.S. government tries to influence this vote? What about the treaty rights held by First Nations in Alberta, most of whom do not want to leave the federation?

- On November 1, 2023, an important case was released by the Quebec Superior Court that declared the Silver Covenant Chain a "meta-oral treaty" that is part of the Canadian Constitution, thanks to Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. How could this historic ruling impact the Canadian federation? What is the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*?

- In 1965, Cambridge University mathematician Irving John 'Jack' Good proposed "The Last Invention" theory which stated that an artificial superintelligence would be the final creation that humans ever need or are able to make.

  In November 2022, *ChatGPT* (Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer), a chatbot, was launched by *OpenAI*. What are the implications of this extraordinary evolution in AI? How has technology dramatically changed Canada and the world? What has been its impact on education?

  What are the consequences of outsourcing our thinking?

- Waterdown has been inhabited by Indigenous Peoples for millennia, including the Neutral Nation, who were among the first to make contact with the French in the 17th and 18th centuries. Currently, we are located within the treaty territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. As well, this land is connected with, and inhabited by, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Flamborough borders the Haldimand Tract). What responsibilities do we have as treaty partners—and this very much includes responsibilities to the land? Waterdown's Souharissen Natural Area and the Treaty Forest remind us of some of these responsibilities, but they also challenge us to learn more.

(Learn more about the mural using the QR Code on the left)

- Learning about our local history is a great way to understand Indigenous history, as well as the history of Canada and the wider world. Our community has been shaped by events and concepts such as the Reformation, colonialism, the Industrial Revolution, private property ownership, and more. During this semester, we will use *The Platinum Jubilee Edition of The Extraordinary History of Flamborough* to analyze the links between Flamborough/Waterdown and the outside world.

HWDSB Cellphone Policy

This classroom will strictly follow the new personal electronic devices policy instituted by the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board in September 2024. The new policy is as follows:

Students must not use their personal electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, laptops, and tablets) during the instructional day. Please see below for more information about expectations for different grade levels:

- Students in Kindergarten to Grade 8 must have their devices stored out of view and powered off (or on silent mode) throughout the full instructional day (school day), including nutrition breaks unless permitted by the educator.

- **Students in Grades 9 to 12 must have their devices stored out of view and powered off (or on silent mode) during instructional time (class time), unless permitted by the educator** as outlined below:

    - For educational purposes, if explicitly permitted by the educator.
    - For health and medical purposes, as outlined in a medical plan of care.
    - To support special education needs, as documented in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

2026-2027 Changes to Evaluation Practices

Starting this school year, the Ontario Ministry of Education has overhauled secondary evaluation practices to mandate written final exams and factor attendance and participation directly into final marks.

New Grade Breakdown:

Grades 9 and 10	• 65% for coursework completed throughout the term • 20% for mandatory final evaluations and written exams • 15% for attendance and classroom participation
Grades 11 and 12	• 65% for coursework completed throughout the term • 25% for mandatory final evaluations and written exams • 10% for attendance and classroom participation

Key Evaluation Rules:

Mandatory Exams: Written final exams are now required for most high school courses, including core subjects like English, math, and science.

Attendance Weighting: Missing too many classes lowers participation and attendance marks, though approved excused absences (such as sports, field trips, or bereavement) do not negatively affect grades.

It has been said that studying history is like playing a huge game of telephone—sifting through various stories, exaggerations, and factual evidence. This course will present you with many kinds of information that affect you as a Canadian.

In looking at Indigenous Nations, Canada, and the world, we will make use of many different resources: artifacts, Elders, videos, primary sources, secondary sources, oral histories, archives, novels, and more. This course has been designed with many elements that you will see after high school, including if you decide to enter post-secondary education. I want you to enjoy history and will do my best to create a positive experience. Please feel free to bring any questions or concerns you have during the course to my attention.

Some resources to keep in mind:

This class has its own website that can be accessed at: www.tidridge.com

This website is as important as your textbook—check here for assignment checklists, class news, links to sites of interest, and other important information.

This class will also make use of "The Hub" – please make sure you have your account up-to-date. All outstanding assignments and notes will be posted here for you.

Wishing you success,

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