

**Canada****Trump officials met group pushing Alberta independence from Canada**

Separatists from oil-rich province try to capitalise on friction between White House and Mark Carney



Jeff Rath, legal counsel to the Alberta Prosperity Project: 'The US is extremely enthusiastic about a free and independent Alberta' © Leah Hennel/Bloomberg

**Ilya Gridneff** in Toronto and **Myles McCormick** in Washington

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The Trump administration has held covert meetings with fringe separatists from Canada's oil-rich province of Alberta as a rift deepens between Washington and Ottawa.

Leaders of the Alberta Prosperity Project, a group of far-right separatists who want the western province to become [independent](#), met US state department officials in Washington three times since April last year, according to people familiar with the talks.

They are seeking another meeting next month with state and Treasury officials to ask for a \$500bn credit facility to help bankroll the province if an independence referendum — yet to be called — is passed.

“The US is extremely enthusiastic about a free and independent Alberta,” Jeff Rath, APP legal counsel, who attended the meetings, told the FT.

He claimed he had a “much stronger relationship” with the Trump administration than Canadian Prime Minister [Mark Carney](#).

A state department spokesperson said: “The department regularly meets with civil society types. As is typical in routine meetings such as these, no commitments were made.”



A recent poll found that approximately three in 10 Alberta residents would vote for it to separate from Canada © Leah Hennel/Bloomberg

A White House official said: “Administration officials meet with a number of civil society groups. No such support, or any other commitments, was conveyed.”

A person familiar with Treasury secretary Scott Bessent’s thinking said neither he nor any other Treasury officials were aware of any credit facility proposal and did not intend to engage on the issue. The person added that no senior Treasury department official had received a request for a meeting.

Spokespeople for the US Treasury and Carney’s office declined to comment.

The contacts coincide with a deterioration in relations between the US and Canada. President Donald Trump and Carney [clashed](#) last week after the Canadian premier suggested Washington was creating a “rupture” in the world order.

The US was unlikely to provide any material support to the fringe separatist movement, according to people familiar with the American position. But the conversations underline the tensions between Washington and Carney's federal government in Ottawa.

Carlo Dade, from the Canada West Foundation, a conservative think-tank in Calgary, described the separatist leaders as "attention seekers". He added: "The Americans are more than happy to continue to play Canadians off each other."

British Columbia premier David Eby described the FT's report of the meeting as alarming because Trump is "not particularly respectful to Canada's sovereignty".

"To go to a foreign country and to ask for assistance in breaking up Canada, there's an old-fashioned word for that. And that word is treason," he told reporters in Ottawa on Thursday.

The Suncor Energy oil refinery in Edmonton, Alberta. The province is the biggest source of foreign oil in the US market © Jason Franson/Bloomberg

Bessent caused a flurry of excitement among Alberta separatists last week when he described the province — the single biggest source of foreign oil in the American market — as "a natural partner for the US".

"The Albertans are very independent people," he told rightwing podcaster Jack Posobiec. "[There is a] rumour that they may have a referendum on whether they want to stay in Canada or not."

The person familiar with Bessent's thinking said the Treasury secretary neither supported nor opposed Alberta's independence movement but views Carney as pursuing a personal agenda to the detriment of the province, highlighting his prior work on climate issues.

Bessent believes Alberta could deepen its ties with the US while remaining a Canadian province, the person added.

Carney grew up in Edmonton, Alberta's capital. The province of 5mn people has had a small independence movement for decades with its roots in Canada's formation more than 150 years ago.

Ipsos [polling](#) conducted last week found approximately three in 10 residents of both Alberta and Quebec would vote for their province to separate from Canada. But unlike Quebec, Alberta's independence movement has never gained any real traction.

The APP is attempting to gather 177,000 signatures to bring an independence petition to the legislature by May. It declined to say how many it had secured to date.

The talks will nonetheless stoke existing concerns of meddling in Canadian domestic affairs by the Trump administration and its proxies.

"We're seeing evidence of foreign interference," said Gil McGowan, president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, pointing to social-media ad campaigns, the use of online bots and Maga influencer voices. "It doesn't feel organic, we are being targeted by the Maga crowd."

"Alberta is an essential partner in our federation," said a spokesperson for Canada-US trade minister Dominic LeBlanc. "[The] government is engaged in renewing the Canada-Alberta relationship based on common objectives and respect for each other's jurisdiction."

Rath declined to say who the APP spoke to in Washington. "We're meeting very, very senior people leaving our meetings to go directly to the Oval Office," he claimed.

The separatist party has adopted similar themes to the UK's Brexit movement. It accuses Ottawa of squandering billions of dollars in oil revenue and touts conspiracies around Chinese influence, Christian persecution and the "globalists" agenda.

Rath said his group had also met officials from Quebec's separatist movement, which lost independence referendums in 1980 and 1995.

Alberta's premier Danielle Smith, who last year lowered the threshold for a referendum, opposes independence for the province.

"The overwhelming majority of Albertans are not interested in becoming a US state," said Smith's spokesperson.

The Alberta Forever Canada campaign, a counter-petition opposing independence, received 438,568 signatures by a December deadline last [year](#).

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