

Agenda for the North American Summit

By [Andrew Gavin Marshall](#)

Region: [Canada](#), [USA](#)

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The next North American Summit is set to be held on April 21-22, 2008, in New Orleans, as a fitting memorial – returning to the location where the state turned its back on the people, literally leaving them to die; and where they now meet to turn their backs once again on the people, leaving them in the dark and their countries near death.

In preparation for the next North American (leaders') Summit, the designated ministers from Mexico, the United States and Canada, met February 28 under the auspices of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP). Industry Canada issued a press release February 28, 2008, which stated, "This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NAFTA has been a tremendous success: trade and commerce among our countries have grown exponentially." Then the press release made the statement that, "Trilateral merchandise trade is approximately \$900 billion in 2007, significantly contributing to economic growth and increased standards of living in all three countries." Given the past few months of economic turmoil, record-breaking oil prices, a collapsing US dollar, and fears of a "1930's style Depression," it's a little premature to be saying our standard of living is on the rise.

After giving lip service to, "respecting the sovereignty, laws, unique heritage, and culture of each country," it states, "we have reviewed progress achieved since Montebello and have directed officials to" five key areas of integration, "Competitiveness, Safe Food & Products, Energy and Environment, Smart & Secure Borders, [and] Emergency Management and Preparedness."

Competitiveness:

The press release states that they will direct officials to, "Continue to implement the strategy to combat piracy and counterfeiting, and build on the Regulatory Cooperation Framework by pursuing collaboration through sectoral initiatives, with an emphasis on the automotive sector." So, it's now time to cement together the already extremely integrated automotive industries of Canada and the US, as currently the Canadian "auto and parts makers export more than 85 per cent of their production south of the border."

It was recently reported that, "More than three-quarters of Canada's exports — including oil, minerals, lumber and passenger vehicles — are sold to Americans. The U.S. housing collapse already has slashed sales of Canadian lumber. Now, as a historic decline in home values causes American consumers to retrench, U.S. auto sales this year are headed to a 10-year low, according to TD Bank Financial Group in Toronto."

So my question is, if it's the integrated economies between Canada and the US, specifically

in the auto industry, that with a falling US economy threaten Canada's own economy to such a great extent, why is the solution more "deep integration"? Looking at this from a perspective of looking out for the interest of Canada's economy, if the ailment we are facing is a result of our near-total dependence and integration with the US economy, why is the cure more of the same? If you stick your finger in an electric socket, you get shocked. If, after doing that, you decide to continually put your finger in the same socket over and over again, expecting different results, you're insane.

Safe Food & Products:

Of this the SPP press release stated that the ministers would advise officials to, "Strengthen cooperation to better identify, assess and manage unsafe food and products before they enter North America, and collaborate to promote the compatibility of our related regulatory and inspection regimes."

Of course, this has already started to be integrated, as it was reported in May of 2007 that, "Canada is set to raise its limits on pesticide residues on fruit and vegetables for hundreds of products," and that, "The move is part of an effort to harmonize Canadian pesticide rules with those of the United States, which allows higher residue levels for 40 per cent of the pesticides it regulates."

Energy and Environment:

Here the ministers state they will advise officials to, "Develop projects under the newly signed Agreement on Science and Technology; and cooperate on moving new technologies to the marketplace, auto fuel efficiency and energy efficiency standards."

On July 24, 2007, it was reported that, "The first trilateral framework agreement on energy science and technology was inked Monday by the energy ministers for Canada, Mexico and the United States," focusing on, "ways to increase cooperation on research and development and to reduce barriers to the deployment of new technologies in biofuels, gas hydrates, hydrogen, carbon capture and storage, clean coal, and electricity transmission." It further stated that, "the three countries will exchange scientific and technical personnel to participate in joint studies and projects." The news report further stated that, "The ministers discussed increasing the region's energy security, recognizing the critical contribution that an integrated energy market makes to the North American economy."

Smart & Secure Borders:

Here the press release reports that ministers will aim to, "Strengthen cooperation protocols and create new mechanisms to secure our common borders while facilitating legitimate travel and trade in the North American region."

Creating "*new mechanisms*" is the most important part here. On January 22, 2008, it was reported that, "B.C. is about to become the first province to use a high-tech driver's licence. For an extra fee, it will enable drivers to cross the border into the U.S. without a passport

and still comply with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security concerns,” and that, “The enhanced driver’s licence or EDL has a radio-frequency identification chip that will broadcast a number linked to a computer database, allowing a border guard to assess data and flag security issues as drivers approach the booth.” It then stated that, “Name, address, place of birth, citizenship and photo will appear with a quick scan of the coding of the back of the licence.”

On February 28, 2008, it was reported that BC made this move “in conjunction with Washington State,” and that, “Ontario and other provinces with high-volume border crossings are expected to follow suit in the near future. Under the U.S.’ Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), passports will be required for all travellers entering the U.S. starting June 2009, but RFID-enabled EDLs are being introduced on a voluntary basis as an acceptable alternative to speed up border crossings.” The report elaborated that, “the Real ID Act enacted in 2005 calls for the harmonization of drivers’ licences across states in the U.S,” which are, in turn being harmonized with Canada’s licenses, and that the real agenda with this is to create a North American ID card. Andrew Clement, a professor of information studies at the University of Toronto was quoted in the article as saying:

The EDL scheme is seen as a way to sneak it [the ID card] through the back door by turning state licences, through U.S.-wide harmonization with biometrics, into de facto identity cards. And the Privacy Commissioner has pointed out that Canada’s EDLs will be made compatible from a system point of view with Real ID standards, so Canadians will in fact be enrolled in the U.S. apparatus via licences. There are several steps to get there but this seems to be the direction it’s heading towards

On top of this, it was reported on February 14 that, “the Garden River First Nation (an Ojibway Tribe of North American Indians), headquartered at the eastern boundary of the city of Sault Sainte Marie, Ontario, Canada, has signed an agreement to license and use Veritec’s 2-D VSCoDe(TM) Biometric technology for multi-purpose cards which will serve as Tribal Member ID, Border-crossing (from and to Ontario, Canada) control and passport-backup ID cards,” and that, “[t]he technology stores the individual’s fingerprint minutiae.” So, while BC is introducing this as a (for now) *voluntary* move, it’s being introduced elsewhere first for First Nations peoples, then, undoubtedly, for everyone.

Emergency Management and Preparedness:

Under this heading, the press release states that SPP minister will work to, “Strengthen emergency management cooperation capacity in the North American region before, during and after disasters.”

This comes right on the heels of the announcement that, “Canada and the U.S. have signed an agreement that paves the way for the militaries from either nation to send troops across each other’s borders during an emergency, but some are questioning why the Harper government has kept silent on the deal.” It was further reported that, “Neither the Canadian government nor the Canadian Forces announced the new agreement, which was signed Feb. 14 in Texas,” and that, “The U.S. military’s Northern Command, however, publicized the agreement with a statement outlining how its top officer, Gen. Gene Renuart, and Canadian Lt.-Gen. Marc Dumais, head of Canada Command, signed the plan, which allows the military from one nation to support the armed forces of the other nation during a civil emergency.”

Soon after this was announced, in the Canadian House of Commons, “the NDP couldn’t get an answer out of Defence Minister Peter MacKay on why his government didn’t release details about a new agreement recently signed with U.S. military,” and that:

According to what little is known of the agreement (the actual document hasn’t been made public and no word if it ever will) it will be up to civilian authorities on whether military assistance is needed and whether U.S. troops will cross the border to help in Canada in the event of a terror attack, flu pandemic, earthquake or some other domestic emergency. Same goes if Canadian troops were needed in the U.S. to deal with similar situations.

Calls for Further, Faster Integration:

The day of this press release from the SPP Ministers, the Canadian newspaper the Globe & Mail reported on the previous night’s debate between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton in which they both threatened to leave NAFTA if they didn’t get certain concessions from Canada and Mexico, and the article stated that if NAFTA was torn up, “Canadians would lose their jobs; companies would go out of business, [and] our standard of living would decline.” However, it is actually that, “NAFTA has been responsible for growing poverty, the creation of a new underclass called the ‘working poor,’ and the concentration of wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer people.”

The Globe & Mail article reports that regarding Obama’s comments toward NAFTA, “CTV reported last night that the Obama camp contacted the Canadian embassy to give them a heads-up about the upcoming rhetoric and to reassure them there was no cause for concern.” Continuing on the idea of a theoretical end to NAFTA, the article states that, “Our politicians can wait with fingers crossed, hoping that Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton, if one of them does become president, won’t follow through,” or, “we can act, as we have acted in the past, to revitalize the Canada-U.S. relationship and turn crisis into opportunity.”

It further states that, “Since 1993, when Jean Chrétien and Bill Clinton ratified NAFTA, Canadian prime ministers have largely ignored issues of economic integration,” which is, of course, an obvious lie. However, it does give mention to, “Incremental efforts at harmonizing regulatory regimes – the once-much-vaunted Security and Prosperity Partnership – have been quietly shelved, left to the bureaucrats to work on, unperturbed by deadlines.” So the problem, according to the Globe and Mail, is that the process of integration is not happening fast enough.

The article then went on to attack those who have attacked the North American Union, stating, “the American economy deteriorated and manufacturing jobs disappeared, prompting xenophobic fears over immigration and trade. Anti-trade zealots such as CNN’s Lou Dobbs promoted paranoia. Their poisonous message has filtered throughout the industrial heartland of the United States.” In explaining a solution to this “crisis”, the article states, “The challenge today is the same; the answer is the same. Prime Minister Stephen Harper should propose a second round of Canada-U.S. trade negotiations.”

The purpose of proposing a new trade negotiation agreement would be for the next President of the United States, presumably a Democrat, and if the Democrats want new environmental regulations, “Then let’s propose a bilateral carbon market based on a cap-and-trade agreement aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.” This idea would likely

follow upon another trend being set in British Columbia. As reported by the Leader-Post, "Driving and other fuel-dependent activities are about to get more expensive in British Columbia as B.C. becomes the first jurisdiction in North America to introduce a consumer-based carbon tax," and that BC Finance Minister "Taylor said the new carbon tax will begin July 1, starting at a rate that will have drivers paying about an extra 2.4 cents per litre of gasoline at the pumps." It elaborated, "The tax will apply to virtually all fossil fuels, including gasoline, diesel, natural gas, coal, propane and home heating fuel. It will increase each year until 2012, reaching a final price of about 7.2 cents per litre at the pumps."

The article finishes by stating, "An activist government will get ahead of the story, with proposals to advance both economic and security integration with the United States as soon as the new president takes office."

Funny, that sounds like what every government since Mulroney's has been doing, so how is doing more of the same, *activist*? Brian Mulroney, who signed onto the initial Canada-US Free Trade Agreement with George HW Bush, has since been rewarded with a seat on the International Advisory Board of the US-based Council on Foreign Relations. Chrétien signed onto NAFTA with Clinton. Paul Martin signed onto the SPP with Bush and Fox, Harper went further with the SPP with Bush and Calderon. Now, Harper is urged to go further with the next American President.

So, what else is new?

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