

Another Johnson Brexit Lie - The 'Super Canada Plus' Deal

By [True Publica](#)

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[TruePublica](#)

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Boris Johnson has declared that Britain can have a “super Canada-plus” free trade agreement with the EU and achieve that by the end of 2020 and that “there is no need” for political alignment. That’s wrong – it’s not realistically possible.

Not too many hurdles to achieve this are there eh? Leaving aside winning an election – and winning it with a good majority first, and having done so, throw in a bit of parliamentary scrutiny (and that’s gone well so far), Boris would need to convince everyone he has the ability to bend time itself.

Negotiations with countries outside of the EU are not supposed to be started until Britain has formally left the EU. And only then, can negotiations formally start. It should be noted that it took the Canadians seven years of intense meetings to get their deal done – and importantly, it is emphatically worse than the deal we currently have under the umbrella of the EU.

So, if Canada is the benchmark deal to be looked up to, which Boris says it should be – it’s only a small inconvenience to know that it is worse than our current arrangement – by a long, long way. To make it sound a bit better a few months ago, the swashbuckling Brexiteers took it from the ‘Canada deal’ to – ‘Canada Plus’ but that idea was trashed by economic experts and so now its called ‘Super Canada Plus.’ In a few months, Boris will be referring to it as the Super-Duper-Spiffngly-Excellent-Canada-Plus-Plus’ deal – but the reality is that this is little more than an economic cul-de-sac going towards the dead-end of nowhere in particular.

Let’s take a small point. The current Canada deal with the EU has almost no provision for the financial and services industries – the largest industry Britain has to offer. Another small problem – there are the customs checks Boris keeps promising will never happen – but will.

There is another issue that the arch Brexiteers keep brushing under the carpet. Regulatory alignment. It’s all boring and complicated I know but it is important to understand that if Britain is to do a deal with the EU it must adhere to their regulations – not the other way around. The only way to agree a deal with Canada and the EU is to restrict the goods we currently send to the EU as our own standards will have fallen to meet that of Canada’s or America’s and so on.

The [political declaration](#) defines the type of future relationship with the EU and is designed to make it unambiguous. It says:

Given the Union and the United Kingdom's **geographic proximity and economic interdependence**, the future relationship must ensure open and fair competition, encompassing robust commitments to ensure a level playing field. The precise nature of commitments should be commensurate with the scope and depth of the future relationship and the economic connectedness of the Parties. These commitments should prevent distortions of trade and unfair competitive advantages. (Paragraph 77).

What this means, in essence, is that Britain needs to toe-the-line with the EU on regulatory alignment – and if Boris doesn't then the only free trade agreement he can get will be disadvantageous to Britain. Of course.

And here is another important small detail. Boris Johnson knows all of this because he is laying claim to the fact that the current deal that has been negotiated has his signature on it. He owns it. And yet, he is saying something different to the deal that has been done. Either he's lying (again) or doesn't understand the deal he's done – in which case, he should be in charge of it.

This is the problem with Brexit. It's not just a dichotomy – it's a political Catch22. We can't win. Throw the dice as many times as you like – the numbers don't fall in Britain's favour.

Look at the words highlighted in that paragraph again. He can't get the same deal that Canada has – because of what was built into the deal, the “geographic proximity and economic interdependence”. In other words, we're next door, not 4,000 miles away and we have ties to each other that if broken would cause immense economic damage.

Talking of Canada – these are the opening words of Boris Johnson's new stable mate Nigel Farage in a document [published January 2016](#) on the EU – **“Leaving the EU will have significant geopolitical and economic consequences. But we believe it is unrealistic to expect a clean break, immediately unravelling forty years of integration in a single step.”** At the time, Farage was promoting a separation project from the EU taking two decades and then a second referendum to approve his recommendation of a Norway plus deal. How the wind blows!

It was [Thomas, Duke of Norfolk](#), in 1538 who wrote to [Thomas Cromwell](#), and coined the term “a man can not have his cake and eat his cake.” Ironically, Cromwell was an English lawyer and statesman who served as chief minister and advisor to King Henry VIII of England from 1532 to 1540. It was he who advised on new powers for the king, referred to today as “Henry VIII Powers”. These are the same executive powers Boris Johnson has given himself in the current Withdrawal Agreement Bill.

As a side note and not particularly relevant right now – the advisor was beheaded.

Britain cannot simultaneously have the benefits of the EU cake as it does right now and eat it without being one of its bakers. If that were possible, what would be the point of the EU as a union of trading countries? There is no such thing as a ‘super Canada Plus’ deal because it's not super, nor will it ever be. It's a bit like producing a packet of crisps and telling everyone it's as nutritious as a tuna, avocado and quinoa salad. It just isn't.

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