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Fact Sheet: U.S.-Canada Beyond the Border and Regulatory Cooperation Council Initiatives

Today, the United States and Canada enjoy the largest bilateral trade and investment relationship in the world. Total trade and investment between the United States and Canada topped \$1.1 trillion in 2010, and those numbers are growing.

The United States and Canada are each other's largest export market, with roughly 20 percent of all U.S. goods exports destined to Canada. U.S. exports to Canada already support 1.7 million jobs, and in 2010 U.S. exports to Canada grew more than U.S. exports to the rest of the world. Canada is the top export destination for 36 U.S. states.

We share common infrastructure, including bridges, tunnels, pipelines, and electricity grids, and our supply chains are integrally linked, with a single good often crossing the shared border multiple times during its production cycle.

Recognizing these dynamics, on February 4, 2011, President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced two initiatives to ensure that the vital economic partnership that joins our two countries continues to be the cornerstone of our economic competitiveness and security as we together face the challenges of the 21st century.

Since the Leaders' announcement, representatives from across the United States Government have worked with their Canadian counterparts to formulate the [Beyond the Border \(BTB\) Action Plan](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/us-canada_btb_action_plan3.pdf) and the [Regulatory Cooperation Council \(RCC\) Action Plan](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/us-canada_rcc_joint_action_plan3.pdf) (http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/us-canada_btb_action_plan3.pdf and http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/us-canada_rcc_joint_action_plan3.pdf) being unveiled today.

Together, these initiatives build on our well-established bilateral cooperation on trade, investment, emergency preparedness, security, and defense. BTB and RCC are complementary and promote transparency, efficiency, and the free and secure flow of people and trade across our borders while maintaining and expanding our already robust relationships that keep people, goods, and services safe and secure.

Beyond the Border

The BTB Action Plan sets out joint priorities for achieving a new long-term security partnership in four key areas, guided by mutual respect for sovereignty and our separate constitutional and legal frameworks that protect individual privacy:

- addressing threats early;
- promoting trade facilitation, economic growth, and jobs;
- strengthening cross-border law enforcement; and
- protecting shared critical infrastructure, including enhancing continental and global cybersecurity.

The BTB Executive Steering Committee (ESC) will hold annual meetings to advance shared border management efforts and identify areas for further progress. To ensure continued transparency and accountability, the BTB ESC will generate a joint, public "Beyond the Border Implementation Report" to summarize BTB cooperation annually. Implementation of the BTB Action Plan will be carried out in close consultation with the wide array of interested stakeholders through appropriate lead agencies and will be subject to normal regulatory, legislative, and appropriations processes.

Through implementation of the BTB Action Plan, the United States and Canada will address threats at the earliest possible point by enhancing our common understanding of the shared threat environment through joint, integrated threat assessments, and by improving our intelligence and national security information sharing. We will enhance domain awareness in air, maritime, and land environments, cooperate to counter violent extremism, and develop harmonized commercial passenger

and cargo screening processes that will expedite the secure passage of people and goods. We will conduct joint assessments of plant, animal, and food systems in third countries to keep our food supplies safe.

Additionally, the United States and Canada will enhance our trusted traveler and trader programs by aligning requirements, enhancing member benefits, and providing applicants with the opportunity to submit one application to be enrolled in multiple programs. We will strive to facilitate business travel across our border, provide a single “window” for importers to submit information needed to comply with customs and other regulations, promote supply chain connectivity by harmonizing low-value shipment processes, and increase public transparency regarding application of border fees, with a view to providing greater accountability for costs to businesses and promoting trade competitiveness.

To keep the flow of goods and people moving smoothly, we will enhance and expand the work of the twenty land border Binational Port Operations Committees established in 2011, coordinate our border infrastructure investment at key border crossings and at small and remote ports of entry to, where possible, align hours of operation and co-manage facilities.

Building on existing cross-border law enforcement frameworks, we will implement a “Next Generation” pilot project to cooperate on national security and transnational criminal investigations and provide law enforcement radio interoperability.

Finally, under the BTB Action Plan the United States and Canada will develop and enhance cross-border critical infrastructure and resilience, protect vital government and critical digital infrastructure of binational importance, and make cyberspace safer for all our citizens, while expanding our joint leadership on international cybersecurity efforts. We also intend to mitigate the impact of binational disasters on communities by establishing procedures to manage land and maritime traffic in the event of a border area emergency, and enhance our collective preparedness for security threats of all types -- health, chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive.

Regulatory Cooperation

The February Statement on Regulatory Cooperation recognized the critical importance of our \$1 trillion annual bilateral trade and investment relationship and established the RCC with a two-year mandate to promote economic growth, job creation, and benefits to our consumers and businesses through increased regulatory transparency and coordination. The United States and Canada intend to eliminate unnecessary burdens on cross-border trade, reduce costs, foster cross-border investment, and promote certainty for the general public and businesses, particularly small- and medium-sized enterprises operating near the border, by coordinating, simplifying, and ensuring where possible the compatibility of regulations.

In March, a Federal Register Notice requested that the public submit ideas for suggested changes to existing regulations that would ease the transport and sale of goods and services on the other side of the border. Given the integrated nature of our economies, greater alignment and better mutual reliance on our regulatory approaches will lead to lower costs for consumers and businesses, create more efficient supply chains, increase trade and investment, generate new export opportunities, and create jobs on both sides of the border. Building on the numerous comments received from the public, we have agreed to focus our initial work on:

- agriculture and food;
- transportation;
- health, personal care products, and workplace chemicals; and
- the environment.

As we implement the Action Plans for BTB and RCC, U.S. and Canadian departments and agencies will continue to incorporate public feedback they receive through traditional mechanisms such as Federal Register Notices, websites, public meetings, and other public engagement.

For more than forty years, the increasing integration of the economies of the United States and Canada has been the key to our two countries' prosperity and security. With these initiatives, we intend to work together to reduce and eliminate barriers to trade and investment, securing our shared competitiveness for the 21st century.

I welcome your comments: Jane Humphreys (Humphreysjc@state.gov)