

## Canada-United States: A Strong Partnership President Obama Visits Canada

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President Obama made his first foreign trip to Canada on February 19, 2009. This should not have been that big a surprise. Tradition maybe, as many have talked about the “traditional” first visit of a US President always being to Canada. But more important than that, the visit underscored the extraordinarily deep, close and unparalleled relationship that Canada and the United States share. We are each other’s neighbors, have the world’s largest trading relationship, and we are friends and allies sharing the world’s largest secure border that stretches across our continent.

“I came to Canada on my first trip as president to underscore the closeness and importance of the relationship between our two nations, and to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to work with friends and partners to meet the common challenges of our time,” said President Obama at his joint press conference with Prime Minister Harper.

President Obama has underlined that his approach to foreign policy will put a priority on strengthening alliances and working with partners to deal with the myriad of issues on the international agenda. Canada has a long tradition of cooperation with the United States in defending our continent and internationally—we have fought together for democracy, freedom and the rule of law in two World Wars, Korea, Kosovo, and more recently in Afghanistan.

It is not surprising therefore that the President and the Prime Minister agreed to work together on a number of key international priorities, with a particular focus on Afghanistan. Currently more than 2,800 Canadian Forces personnel are serving in Afghanistan, placing us as one of the leading members of the 37-nation NATO-led International Security Assistance Force mission in that country. We are also among the top bilateral donors in Afghanistan in the world today. In fact, Afghanistan has become Canada’s single largest development program. Our contribution is expected to surpass US\$ 1.6 billion over the period of 2001-2011.

Then there are the Americas. Canada and the United States share similar objectives in the hemisphere—promoting prosperity, supporting democracy and ensuring security. The two leaders will work together to promote these objectives at the Summit of the Americas in April. The past decade has brought dramatic change to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite the region’s recent progress, poverty and inequality remain the primary development challenges. Re-engagement in our hemisphere had been a critical international priority for Canada and we are committed to playing a bigger role in the Americas and to doing so for the long term.

The United States is the largest economy in the world, Canada is the eighth. Our two-way trading relationship is the largest in the world—\$1.9 billion in two-way goods and services trade a day or almost \$2 million every minute. Over seven million US jobs are directly supported by trade with Canada, including 1.3 million in the northern border states alone. We are your best customers. In 2007, Canada was the #1 export market for 35 states and total US exports to Canada exceeded total US exports to the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, and China combined.

In Ottawa, the two leaders agreed that Canada and the United States need to pursue economic recovery measures and efforts to strengthen the international financial system to counter the global economic recession. Respective economic recovery plans with the focus on saving and creating jobs, and how best to tackle common challenges, including restructuring of the North American auto sector, were discussed.

In recognition of the integrated nature of our economies and common interest in restoring financial stability, Canada joined the United States in implementing robust economic measures to help the North American economy. Economic stimulus measures proposed in Canada's 2009 federal budget total 1.9 percent of the country's 2009 GDP, readily fulfilling our G-20 commitments to provide timely stimulus to domestic demand while maintaining long-run fiscal sustainability.

Canada and the United States will also actively work together to ensure that the G-20 Summit in April contributes to restoring confidence in financial markets.

Noting the long and productive history of bilateral cooperation on continental environmental protection and energy trade and technology, the Prime Minister and the President agreed that environmental protection and the development of clean energy are inextricably linked. They announced plans to work together to build a new energy economy as a key element of broader economic recovery and reinvestment efforts.

The leaders discussed practical ways Canada and the United States could encourage the development of clean energy technologies to reduce greenhouse gases and combat climate change. A senior-level Canada-US Clean Energy Dialogue was established. It will focus on:

- ◆ Expanding clean energy research and development
- ◆ Developing and deploying clean energy technology
- ◆ Building a more efficient electricity grid based on clean and renewable generation

It is important to underline that Canada and the United States share common objectives on climate change. We share an integrated energy market and environment. Canada has also committed to reduce our national greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2020. We have set an objective of meeting 90 percent of Canada's electricity needs from non-emitting sources such as hydro, nuclear, clean coal or wind power by 2020.

As the largest energy supplier to the United States of oil, natural gas, uranium and electricity, Canada is committed to reducing environmental impacts from its energy production and use. Through the Clean Energy Dialogue, we will collaborate on developing new technologies, such as carbon capture and storage, which will further reduce our emissions.

Finally, the two leaders talked about enhancing our collective security in North America, including reviewing the management of the Canada-US border. Both leaders want to build on the strong relationship in the areas of defense, border security, immigration enforcement, intelligence and law enforcement, to facilitate the cross border flow of trade and people.

“There is no such thing as a threat to the national security of the United States which does not represent a direct threat to [Canada]. We as Canadians have every incentive to be as cooperative and alarmed about the threats that exist to the North American continent,” said Prime Minister Harper.

Canadians were thrilled to welcome President Obama to Ottawa. It was an excellent start to a new chapter in Canada-United States relations which will lead to a further deepening of an already strong and vibrant partnership.