



EBTC INFORMATION BULLETIN

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SUBJECT: New York/Quebec Meeting: Secure drivers' licences

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

The extent of America's security focus in its post-2001 relations with Canada may now be off-balance, Quebec Premier Jean Charest and New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer signalled after meeting last Friday.

Technological advances have now rendered obsolete the credo that "security trumps trade" in cross-border dealings, the two leaders agreed.

"We need to break from the notion that the two stand mutually opposite from each other," Spitzer said at a news conference with Charest in New York.

"The wondrous thing about technology is that ... (we can) embed in driver's licences various chips that will permit speed, requisite security and the flow of commerce."

Spitzer said he was "very comfortable" with the idea Canadians should be allowed to pass into the United States showing only a driver's licence for identification, rather than a passport, as will soon be required.

"I am working with the United States Department of Homeland Security to see if we can participate in the pilot projects that would permit us to move forward with a driver's licence identification."

Paul Cellucci, then-U.S. ambassador to Canada, alarmed cross-border business leaders in 2003 when he said the dominant issue for the United States in U.S.-Canada relations had shifted from trade to security.

"When Cellucci said that, he encapsulated what the sentiment is," said Charest. But "one does not contradict the other," he insisted in reference to the security-trade balance.

In a nod to the continued U.S. concern about security, Charest referenced the issue high up in an earlier luncheon address before New York's business elite and other dignitaries. But

he passed quickly onto economic matters, perhaps signalling his preference for trade to again become the dominant theme in cross-border relations.

"We're economically successful because we trade," he said. "We have no choice" since the population bases of both Quebec and Canada are small compared to the internal market of the United States.

In what is a thorny issue for the United States as it continues to seek a solution to the presence of 12 million illegal immigrants, Charest detailed his government's initiatives to encourage labour mobility both within Canada and internationally.

"We are not going to be as competitive as we once were with emerging countries in the area of manufacturing," he said. "But we can lead the world in terms of knowledge ... and if we are able to allow this mobility to happen in a seamless way, that is the place we should go."

Charest also detailed Quebec's ability to deliver increasing amounts of "clean" energy, from hydroelectric and wind generation.

"From an energy point of view, this was positive reinforcement of Quebec's energy program," said Breanne Dougherty, senior analyst with Pira Energy Group in New York.

"North America is an energy-consuming society so (Charest's talk of expanding energy production) is a win-win situation for both sides of the border."