

REMARKS

**MARK HIGH
PRESIDENT, CANADA-US BUSINESS ASSOCIATION**

**Eastern Border Transportation Coalition
2014 Fall Workshop
Ontario Investment and Trade Center
250 Yonge St. 35th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
*“Envisioning the Border of the Future”***

**STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES SESSION
2:15 PM
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2014**

Good afternoon. It is a great pleasure to be with you this afternoon representing the Canada-US Business Association, also known as “CUSBA.”

CUSBA is an independent, non-profit entity that was formed over 20 years ago for the purpose of advancing the cross-border business interests in Southeast Michigan and Southwest Ontario. This area has the largest volume of cross-border trade within the largest bilateral trading relationship in the world. For the overwhelming majority of CUSBA’s history, the organization was an extension of the Consulate General of Canada in Detroit. CUSBA would host several events each year that generally fell when a minister or other high-level Canadian government official came to the region. Someone would pull out the logo, mail out some invites, get maybe 80 people to a lunch, then put it back in the drawer for the next time.

CUSBA did play a key role in the wake of the September 11 events when the two countries advanced the smart border declaration, as well as several years later when

our regional travel and tourism communities became energized over the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) to deal with the “passport issue.” Notwithstanding the various successes over that two decade period, CUSBA was not designed to be a stand-alone organization – no officers, no Board, no membership, no independent funding source. In the 08-09 Downturn period, it, like a lot of groups in Michigan and elsewhere, just sort of went away.

Several years ago, a number of interested people began to envision a more permanent and active organization of cross-border business stakeholders. Encouraged by the Consulate General, which couldn't run it alone anymore, I was asked to put together a “new” CUSBA. With the help of then-Consul General Norton and David Weiner from his staff, we revitalized our Board of Directors to include the Consulate, State of Michigan officials from the MEDC and the Michigan small business and technology center; Matt Marchand from the Windsor-Essex Chamber of Commerce, a cross-border accounting firm, law firms, JP Morgan Chase, and other public and private entities in the region. We continue to build out this Board and develop renewed relationships with key stakeholders such as the Detroit Regional Chamber, APMA, OESA, and many others.

We started with a focus session facilitated by Deloitte Consulting, which helped us establish a purpose and direction. We thereafter committed to hosting regular, quarterly, programming, focused each year on an issue facing the cross-border community. Our early programming targeted the new international trade crossing. In our first event, we welcomed Governor Snyder of Michigan and Consul General Norton to the Westin Book Cadillac in downtown Detroit to discuss the NITC in the weeks leading up to the critical Michigan referendum on that subject. We later hosted former Michigan Gov. John Engler and the Hon. John Manley in the same venue to offer their perspectives on Canada-US trade in their capacities as officers of their respective national industry associations.

Early each February (and we will again in 2015), we host a Canada-US economic forecasting event at the Detroit Federal Reserve that coincides with the “open” period for the Federal Reserve after its January Board of Governors meeting. We have hosted Canadian chief economists from TD Bank, ScotiaBank, and, this coming February, Export Development Canada to offer the Canadian perspective, with an economist from the Fed speaking on the US piece. In just a few weeks, on October 7th, we will be examining Manufacturing Issues in the Modern Cross-Border Auto Industry – with Board member Michael Robinet from IHS Global and Laurie Harbour from Harbour Research.

And we have a little fun, such as participating in a benefit for a local food bank, where Martin Short performed; sponsoring an event promoting the CN food sector for a local PBS TV affiliate; and various other get-togethers at interesting locations – the Hiram Walker House in Windsor, and touring the Shinola watch factory in Midtown Detroit, for example. We generally get over 100 people to these events, sometimes 150, plus have access to almost 100 members on our mailing list, a general email list of about 400, and over 300 people are signed up on our LinkedIn page, which posts all events of interest to the community, and sends out updates on current affairs.

I go through this history to demonstrate that CUSBA is emerging as a “go-to” resource for cross-border business perspectives in our region. For example, earlier this year, I was invited to join a roundtable of 20 regional leaders meeting with US Homeland Security Secretary Johnson, members of our Michigan congressional delegation, representatives from the CN Ministry of Transportation and Ontario parliament, and other associations to demonstrate the need for the new Detroit-Windsor Bridge.

We presently are coordinating activities with the Detroit Regional Chamber to assemble comments from the auto sector for the Regulatory Cooperation Council. Other issues on our radar include labor mobility (which my partner, Dan Ujczko will discuss in a few moments); food safety regulatory changes which will undeniably impact the agri-food

supply chains between Leamington and the US; and facilitating cross-border medical services. We are monitoring the potential retaliation list on country of origin labelling where Canada is targeting steel and furniture in an effort to “encourage” US Sen. Stabenow to see Canada’s side on those issues. We want to turn “Buy American” and “Buy Canadian” into “Buy North American”.

So, we intend to be the voice of the Canada-US business community in our region on a broad array of topics. Our view is that a missing component in Canada-US is the engagement with regional and local stakeholders. We must keep the public engaged on Canada-US, even when there is not a “problem.” We need only look to the Bridge and Keystone XL to see the dangers of not communicating locally – ultimately, there are many issues that cannot be solved only in Ottawa or Washington.

And I think we can do more. There used to be the Northern Border Economic, Security, & Trade Coalition (NBEST) that was a quarterly meeting of Homeland Security, CBSA, and other regulators with the Canada-US business community. Later, this turned into the BESTT coalition that was a bi-national consortium addressing border crossing issues. Has the need for those gone away? As we have discussed today – hardly. There has recently been no organization designed to bring together the Canada-US community in Michigan and Ontario. That is CUSBA’s mission.

We are about supporting those projects that will benefit the cross-border business communities and create jobs for families in our region. My vision is that we might develop a network of CUSBAs in the area – in Buffalo, Northeast Ohio, Columbus, Nashville, Chicago. We already partner with the resurgent AmCham networks in GTA and across Canada – I met their national vice chair last March in Ottawa and we are already sharing planning and calendars.

So, I invite you to come talk to CUSBA as part of your stakeholder consultation mechanisms. We are here to build bridges – figuratively, and literally. We can be a resource for contacts and information, and we can offer a platform to advance ideas and publicize issues. We welcome speaker ideas, and always have room for sponsors of our events. More information is available at our Web sites – cusbaonline.com and cusba.ca.

Thanks for your time this afternoon.

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