

Remarks by the Honourable Bernadette Jordan to the Eastern Border Transportation
Coalition – May 8, 2024

Thank you, Derek, merci beaucoup, for that warm introduction. And thank you to the organizers of this meeting for inviting me to speak to you today about the Canada-U.S. relationship.

I understand it's been five years since you were last all together in person. So much has happened in that time: the COVID-19 pandemic and its many consequences; changes in political administrations; floods and wildfires; advances in artificial intelligence.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the world we have wars raging in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, and increased wariness in the Pacific, all of which are impacting everything from energy prices to shipping costs and forcing the re-direction of long-held supply chains.

As compared with five years ago, our world today is marked by geopolitical turbulence, unpredictability, and uncertainty.

All of which leaves me thinking: how fortunate Canada and the United States are to have one another as neighbours and partners.

When you think of how difficult some other countries have it with their neighbours, it quickly puts into perspective the value of the Canada-US relationship.

As the Consul General of Canada in New England, I have the pleasure of representing the government of Canada in 5 of the 6 New England states. It was just over 75 years ago that the Government of Canada opened its first office in Boston to represent Canada's interests throughout New England.

But of course, the strong connections between Canadians and New Englanders date back long before then. Our communities, starting with the indigenous peoples who were the first to inhabit the land, have found reason to exchange, create, innovate and build together for centuries.

For those of you from New England, some of your families may have been among those who migrated from Quebec or Acadia to work in the mill towns of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, or Maine over a century ago, contributing to vibrant francophone communities that continue to this day.

And the exchanges between our communities have only grown from there. There are the fun exchanges, like when our local sports teams participate in tournaments with their neighbours on the other side of the border.

There are the helpful exchanges, like when American firefighters travelled north last summer to assist us as we battled wildfires, just as Canadian linesmen and women have been known to come south when a Nor'easter knocks out power lines down here.

As President Biden said just over a year ago when he addressed the Canadian Parliament, "Americans and Canadians are two people, two countries, sharing one heart. ... No two nations on Earth are bound by such close ties — friendship, family, commerce, and culture."

I couldn't agree more. We've always been there for one another and I'm here today to tell you, you can continue to count on Canada. Because friends, we are at a critical moment: for Canada, the U.S., and the world.

We are on the edge of a generational shift, as issues like climate change and artificial intelligence demonstrate the potential to profoundly alter the way we live our lives. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic that isolated our communities and in the face of ongoing conflicts like those in Ukraine and the Middle East that continue to stretch supply chains, we are seeing historic global geopolitical realignment.

In the face of these many complex challenges, we know the solutions to these problems will not emerge from just one country. They are challenges that we must tackle together.

For Canada, the path to successfully meeting these challenges runs straight through the U.S. And for the U.S., the path to success runs straight through Canada.

Our two countries share more than a border. We share the same values: Democracy. Rule of law. Respect for human rights. These shared values have been the basis for our strong partnership and international cooperation for decades. And as we look to the future, these shared values, together with our mutual commitment to shared security and prosperity, will continue to be the bedrock foundation of a deep mutual trust and collaboration that will help our two countries reach our greatest potential.

Our economies have long been highly integrated, but given the disruptions to supply chains in recent years, at their very first meeting in February 2021, President Biden and Prime Minister Trudeau agreed to reinforce our deeply interconnected and mutually beneficial economic relationship and launched a strategy to further strengthen Canada-U.S. supply chain security.

Let me give you some examples.

If our countries are to be leaders in the green and digital economies, we will need reliable, trusted sources of critical minerals, the essential building blocks not only for electric vehicles, but for renewable energy production like the wind turbines that dot the Vermont landscape.

I'm proud to say that Canada has 31 such critical minerals and together with the United States we are working to create a strong, environmentally responsible, and resilient North American critical minerals supply chain.

We're also building integrated supply chains for our semiconductors, those chips that are so vital to our cars, iPhones or the MRI machine at your local hospital. Chips made in Vermont and Upstate New York are shipped just across the border to Bromont, Quebec, home to the largest semiconductor packaging and testing facility in North America.

Americans can count on Canada not only because we have the resources, but because we share your values. It's thanks to those shared values that North America has become an economic powerhouse: the most competitive, prosperous, and resilient economic region in the world.

The strength of the Canada-US economic relationship simply cannot be understated: we trade over one trillion dollars in goods and services annually. That's over 2.5 billion dollars each day!

China may be the United States' largest trading partner, but the fact is, Canada is the United States' largest customer. Canada buys over two times more goods from the U.S. than China. Did you know that 7.8 million U.S. jobs are supported by that trade with Canada?

But what is truly remarkable about our free and balanced trading relationship is that we not only sell things to each other: we make things together. In fact, most Canadian exports to the U.S. are inputs that contribute to U.S. manufactured goods which are then sold around the world.

Whether it's the Saskatchewan oats that are manufactured into Cheerios in upstate New York, or that specialized piece of machinery tooled here in Vermont that eventually finds its way into an aircraft built in Montreal...

Or perhaps it's the auto that crosses the border 7-8 times before its final assembly in Mississauga or Michigan...

Or maybe it's the energy that flows on one of the 70 pipelines and 35 transmission lines that cross our border every day, keeping the lights on in the factories and homes in each of your communities...

No matter the sector, we build things together.

It's that trade that directly contributes not just to each country's economic prosperity, but to North America's competitiveness in the world.

And the work that you do to strengthen the transportation linkages between our two countries greatly contributes to that competitiveness and prosperity. Let's look at a few specific examples.

Our two countries are working to harmonize charging standards and develop cross-border alternative fuel corridors, including a network of electric vehicle fast chargers and community charging options on both sides of the border.

Just over a year ago, the first Canada - United States Alternative Fuel Corridor was announced. This corridor, from Kalamazoo, Michigan to Quebec City, represents not only one of the busiest passenger and trade corridors between our two countries, but is also a key component of Canada's national transportation system, connecting major cities, ports, airports, railways, and highways.

Given our interconnectedness and our mutual commitment to electrifying our transportation sector, I anticipate this is just the first of many such alternative fuel corridors that will eventually spring up between us.

Because the last few years have put into stark reality how vulnerable supply chains are to shocks like extreme weather, social disruptions, or wars in distant lands, our two countries have also initiated a Border Resilience Project.

This project seeks to better understand cross-border supply chain vulnerabilities in order to facilitate the identification and prioritization of infrastructure projects or policies that could mitigate trade disruption.

It is also developing a new risk assessment framework for key road and rail ports of entry based on economic criticality and vulnerability to disruption, with a view to ensuring this framework can be expanded to security risks at additional ports of entry and for additional modes.

The Border Resilience Project will hold its first-ever trade disruption tabletop exercise next month at the Peace Bridge.

The findings from efforts like this Border Resilience Project will be important for future joint efforts, like the next iteration of the Border Infrastructure Improvement Plan.

Now, because an efficient and reliable transportation network is key to any country's economic growth, the Government of Canada, through the National Trade Corridors Fund, is supporting improvements to Canada's roads, rail, air, and marine shipping routes to foster domestic and international trade.

Most recently, with affordability concerns being top of mind for many of our communities, Canada announced the creation of the National Supply Chain Office, which has the foremost goal of increasing the fluidity, efficiency, resilience, and reliability of Canada's supply chains through collaboration with industry, labour, other orders of government, and other partners. The Office will also contribute to reducing congestion through the transportation supply chain.

Among other things, this Office is tasked with conducting outreach on global supply chain issues and developing a National Supply Chain Strategy. The Office is open to inputs from stakeholders on priority system-level supply chain issues and collaborative solutions and I encourage you to engage with them.

In 1987, when President Reagan addressed the Canadian Parliament, he described the border between our two countries as more of a meeting place than a dividing line. Don't get me wrong – there is indeed still a border between us. After all, we are two sovereign nations. But at 5,500 miles long (or 8,800 kms, as we would say), it's the longest and most peaceful shared border, one that I would hazard to say is the envy of the world.

Our respective law enforcement agencies work hand-in-hand to ensure our shared border is safe and protected 24/7, 365 days a year, keeping threats at bay while making vital cross-border trade and travel as efficient as possible. This co-management of our shared border is a shining example of a healthy, predictable partnership with built-in standards to solve problems together.

A good example of that partnership can be found in our responses to the deadly car explosion at the Peace Bridge last autumn. Our respective law enforcement and transportation officials were in constant communication as the situation unfolded.

It is that kind of partnership that allows over 400,000 people to cross the Canada-U.S. border every single day. Crossing perhaps for work, perhaps for play, but no matter the reason, knowing they'll find a warm welcome on the other side of the border.

Because we have always embraced a joint approach to security and facilitation, we are building our capacity to manage the border in a way that addresses our increasingly interconnected and interdependent economies and shared security concerns.



This joint approach to security and facilitation is also exemplified in our use of preclearance which as many of you know allows our respective border officials to work on each others' soil to "pre-clear" travellers bound for each others' countries. Not only does this provide faster and more reliable service moving through border points, but it also provides a higher level of security by identifying potential threats, ensuring they never arrive in the United States.

While our two countries have been undertaking preclearance in Canadian airports since 1952, a new Preclearance Treaty came into effect in August 2019. This new Treaty allows preclearance to expand into all modes of transportation: land, rail, marine, air, as well as cargo operations.

Although Canada currently has no preclearance operations in the U.S., Canada will soon explore the benefits of preclearance for travellers and commercial by implementing a land pilot at Cannon Corners, New York.

This is a true testament to our binational cooperation and an exciting first for Canada. Not only will implementing Canadian preclearance operations in the U.S. provide Canada with an opportunity to improve program integrity and facilitate cross-border movement of legitimate travel and trade, but it will also provide necessary lessons learned that will allow us to explore future opportunities for permanent preclearance operations.

I understand you will have an opportunity to learn more about the technical aspects of this project from my CBSA colleagues after lunch.

I am also pleased to note that as part of its commitment to border modernization, the Canada Border Services Agency is in the process of upgrading and replacing 24 ports of entry over the next several years to improve the border crossing experience for travellers, provide border services officers with upgraded infrastructure and technology, and deliver on the border of the future.

This Land Border Crossing Project constitutes the largest infrastructure project in the history of the CBSA and is taking a collaborative approach that includes engaging with U.S. stakeholders. Stay tuned for more details on how to engage with projects in your states.

Friends, in conclusion, I hope you understand that ultimately Canadians and Americans share the same goal: We want to feel safe in our communities and we want good jobs that will pave the way for a healthier, more sustainable economy for all.

But more importantly, I hope you understand that our success stories will not be what we do independently, but what we continue to achieve together.

Let's continue to walk the path to the future united – because Canada always has been and will remain your strongest partner, and ally.

Thank you/Merci.