

PROGRESS ON NORTHERN BORDER

Since September 11, 2001, the United States and Canada have made steady progress on the northern border front of the War on Terrorism. The mission on the northern border is clearly defined: enhance national security *without* impeding the flow of legitimate trade and travel across our shared border. The stakes are high. The threat to national security is real, and the protection of our nations' citizenry must be paramount. However, security enhancements must be designed and implemented in a trade-efficient manner. The vitality of our trade relationship, representing the largest bilateral exchange in the world, depends on it.

The Smart Border Declaration's 30-Point Action Plan, formally agreed upon in December 2001 by U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge and then Canadian Deputy Prime Minister John Manley, provides the roadmap for achieving this mission and creating a "smart" border—one that enhances border security while facilitating the flow of legitimate trade and travel. The two countries, through coordination and information-sharing, have made considerable progress in fulfilling the commitments of the 30-Point Plan.

The U.S. Congressional Northern Border Caucus—a bipartisan advocacy group for issues affecting U.S.-Canada border relations—believes it important to step back and recognize some of the successes achieved thus far under the 30-Point Plan:


The NEXUS highway program—an alternative border clearance program implemented by both the U.S. and Canadian governments—is currently operational at eight border crossings. NEXUS provides dedicated "fast" lanes for pre-approved travelers. By expediting the passage of these pre-approved travelers, U.S. and Canadian customs and immigration authorities are better able to focus their efforts on potentially high-risk people and goods. There are currently five NEXUS enrollment centers and, as of December 2003, more than 54,000 approved NEXUS members. Further, the U.S. and Canada are working to implement a joint NEXUS-Air program for air travelers, with enrollment scheduled to begin in March 2004. With over 200 million people crossing our shared border every year, NEXUS offers an invaluable service on the northern border.

The FAST program—a system partnering the private sector with the U.S. and Canadian governments to ensure a secure supply chain of low risk goods—is currently operational at twelve border crossings. FAST provides lanes for large volume shippers of pre-screened goods crossing the border. Again, by expediting the passage of these pre-screened goods, U.S. and Canadian customs and immigration officials are better able to focus their efforts on potentially high-risk people and goods. By the end of 2004, the U.S. and Canada plan to have FAST operational at all 22 major commercial crossings. Further, the two countries are in the process of aligning customs processes for all commercial shipments by 2005. Progress has been made. For example, in July 2003, the U.S. and Canada announced proposed harmonized rules requiring the electronic transmission of cargo information for all cross-border shipments made by any mode of commercial transportation.

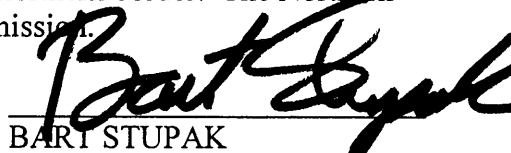
The IBET program—a program partnering U.S. and Canadian law enforcement to target cross-border criminal and terrorist activity—is now operational at most strategic locations across the entire northern border. IBETs are multi-agency teams that combine U.S. and Canadian law enforcement, immigration, and customs officials working together with local, state and provincial enforcement agencies. Through joint cooperation and sharing of information, these teams are better able to identify and interdict criminals and terrorists. The border is more secure with these teams in place.

The U.S. and Canada have conducted joint cross-border counter-terrorism training exercises. For example, in May 2003, the U.S. and Canada conducted a 5-day, \$16 million, full-scale simulation—code-named Operation TOPOFF2—designed to enhance cross-border preparedness for a potential terrorist attack using weapons of mass destruction. TOPOFF2 will likely serve as a model for future joint training activities.

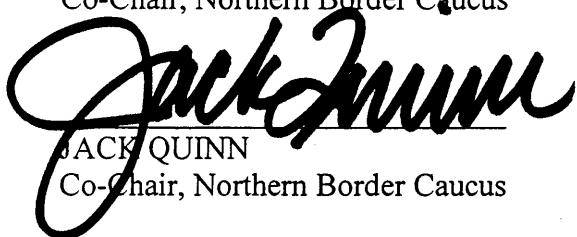
The challenge now is to build on these successes, continue the momentum built under the Ridge-Manley “Smart Border” plan, and develop a new set of goals to further the mission of creating a more secure, trade-efficient northern border. The Northern Border Caucus stands ready to help in fulfilling this mission.



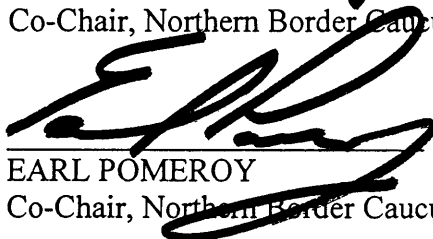
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