

## The Ugly Return of the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP)

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Monday, March 14, 2011

<https://politicsrespun.org/2011/03/the-ugly-return-of-the-security-and-prosperity-partnership-spp/>

This time Mexico isn't invited, but on February 4, 2011, Stephen Harper and Barack Obama [announced a new era of the SPP](#). Today, [the Government of Canada announced](#) [see the press release below] a 5-week consultation process "with all levels of government and with communities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, as well as with our citizens."

How is this any different from the SPP, beyond Mexico's absence? I emailed the international trade minister's press secretary and received no answer by posting time this morning.

Regardless, this consultation sounds fantastic except for a few things.

There is a strong chance of a federal election being called in the next 1-2 weeks. This makes such a consultation process unlikely. In fact, the cynical may infer from this announcement that the notoriously unconsultative Harper **will** call an election in the next couple weeks to avoid such a process, as well as to beat a non-confidence motion on an anti-social, pro-corporate budget; or more likely, why not announce a consultation process that we know won't happen because of the election campaign.

And if this consultation round were to actually take place, I have a hard time believing it will be an open, transparent, nation-wide, unbiased, robust consultation taking all opinions into account. The Senate's appointed Conservative majority, as opposed to the elected MPs, will hold about a dozen meetings to review the soon to expire Canada Health Accord, but all of the meetings will be in Ottawa.

Paul Martin started the SPP and participated in a number of anti-democratic discussions, including the officially-admitted use of agents provocateurs at Montebello in 2007. The de facto coalition of the federal Conservative and Liberal parties demonstrates their common economic and security goals. I would be surprised if the current government would be any less anti-democratic than the previous government.

Another concern about this initiative is the renewed interest in harmonizing and reducing regulations; these are two hallmarks of the neoliberal agenda now embodied in the new "Canada-United States Regulatory Cooperation Council (RCC) that will make regulations in a range of sectors **more compatible** and **less burdensome** in both countries." You may remember that before the SPP brand was retired a few years ago, [they tried to harmonize pesticide variations out of existence in a deregulatory race to the bottom](#).

The last version of security and prosperity talks also included a brilliantly anti-democratic North American corporate legislature called the [North American Competitiveness Council](#) comprised of around a dozen of the largest corporations from each of the North American countries.

It's important to be vigilant. They'll repackage the same ugly neoliberal, shock doctrine recipe whenever

we let our guard down.

Ultimately, I'm lucky to not have removed SPP from my Categories topics to the left.

*To view this document on the department website, please click on the following link:*

<http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/news-communiqués/2011/099.aspx>

### ***International Trade Minister Van Loan and Minister of State Lebel Launch Public Consultation on Shared Vision for Canada-U.S. Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness***

*(No. 99 - March 13, 2011 - 11:30 a.m. ET) The Honourable Peter Van Loan, Minister of International Trade, and the Honourable Denis Lebel, Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), acting on behalf of the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced the launch of a public consultation on the shared vision for Canada-U.S. perimeter security and economic competitiveness enunciated February 4, 2011, in a joint declaration by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and President Barack Obama.*

*“The Government of Canada is focusing on creating jobs and expanding economic growth through free, open and secure trade with the United States,” said Minister Van Loan, speaking at the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls, Ontario. “We are seeking Canadians’ input on ways both countries can move forward to a safer, more secure and prosperous future. I invite all interested parties to make their views known.”*

*“We are committed to consulting with Canadians on the implementation of the shared vision for perimeter security and economic competitiveness,” said Minister of State Lebel, speaking at the Port of Montreal. “Our shared vision for perimeter security will protect citizens in both countries while ensuring that our common border remains open to the legitimate movement of people, goods and services.”*

*As stated in the Declaration, the Government of Canada will engage with all levels of government and with communities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, as well as with our citizens, on innovative approaches to security and competitiveness. This consultation will inform the development of a joint Canada-United States action plan that will set out a range of initiatives in four key areas of cooperation to promote security and support trade and economic growth.*

*In addition to the Declaration, the two leaders also announced the creation of the Canada-United States Regulatory Cooperation Council (RCC) that will make regulations in a range of sectors more compatible and less burdensome in both countries. As the work of the RCC gets under way, more information will be made available to Canadians.*

*For more information on the public consultation or to submit comments, consult [www.borderactionplan.gc.ca](http://www.borderactionplan.gc.ca). The public consultation period is scheduled to run from March 13 to April 21, 2011. A report summarizing the findings of the consultation will be published later in the year.*

*For the complete text of Prime Minister Harper and President Obama’s statement, please visit [Beyond](#)*

[the Border: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness.](#)

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*A backgrounder follows.*

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## ***Backgrounder - Public Consultation on Shared Vision for Canada-U.S. Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness***

*On February 4, 2011, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and U.S. president Barack Obama issued a declaration entitled *Beyond the Border: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness*, establishing a new, long-term partnership that will accelerate the legitimate flow of people and goods between the two countries.*

*Canada and the United States will develop a joint action plan that will set out a range of initiatives in four key areas of cooperation to promote security and support trade and economic growth. The *Beyond the Border Working Group*, composed of representatives of both governments, will develop and oversee the implementation of the action plan. The group will look at ways to preserve and extend the benefits of the close Canada-U.S. relationship to create and sustain the millions of jobs that depend on this vital economic partnership.*

*As cross-border travel and trade figures indicate, Canada and the United States are deeply interconnected—a testament to the close relationship between the two countries:*

- *Every day, some 200,000 people cross the border for business, pleasure or to visit family or friends.*
- *Canada-U.S. two-way merchandise trade was \$501.4 billion in 2010, up from \$456.9 billion the previous year.*
- *More than \$1 million in goods and services cross the Canada-U.S. border every minute.*
- *Direct investment by each country in the other stands at more than \$250 billion.*
- *Canada is the largest and most secure and stable supplier of energy to the U.S. market.*
- *Canada is the United States' largest export market and the single largest export market for 34 U.S. states.*
- *Canadian exports to the United States support one in seven jobs in Canada.*

### ***Key areas of the declaration***

*Beyond the Border: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness is based on principles that recognize and respect the two countries' separate constitutional and legal frameworks as these pertain to the protection of privacy, civil liberties and human rights. The declaration also recognizes the sovereign right of each country to act independently in its own interests and in accordance with its laws.*

*The declaration focuses on four key areas of cooperation. Some excerpts follow.*

#### ***1. Addressing threats early***

*“Collaborating to address threats before they reach our shores, we expect to develop a common understanding of the threat environment through improved intelligence and information sharing, as well as joint threat assessments to support informed risk-management decisions...”*

#### ***2. Trade facilitation, economic growth and jobs***

*“We intend to pursue creative and effective solutions to manage the flow of traffic between Canada and the United States. We will focus investment in modern infrastructure and technology at our busiest land ports of entry, which are essential to our economic well-being...”*

#### ***3. Integrated cross-border law enforcement***

*“We intend to build on existing bilateral law-enforcement programs to develop the next generation of integrated cross-border law-enforcement operations that leverage cross-designated officers and resources to jointly identify, assess and interdict persons and organizations involved in transnational crime...”*

#### ***4. Critical infrastructure and cyber-security***

*“We intend to work together to prevent, respond to, and recover from physical and cyber disruptions of*

*critical infrastructure and to implement a comprehensive cross-border approach to strengthen the resilience of our critical and cyber-infrastructure with strong cross-border engagement...”*

### ***Goal of shared vision***

*The goal of the shared vision is not to replace or eliminate the border, but rather to improve border management, streamline programs and develop a plan to ensure the ongoing modernization of border infrastructure. Both countries have a shared responsibility for their mutual safety, security and resilience in an increasingly integrated and globalized world.*

### ***Regulatory Cooperation Council***

*Canada and the United States have two of the most integrated economies in the world. This commercial relationship, which supports millions of jobs on both sides of the border, is essential to the prosperity of both countries.*

*In addition to the Declaration, the two leaders also announced the creation of a Canada-United States Regulatory Cooperation Council (RCC) that will make regulations in a range of sectors more compatible and less burdensome in both countries, which is especially important for small businesses.*

*The two leaders believe that the citizens of both countries deserve smarter, more effective approaches to regulation that enhance economic competitiveness, while maintaining high standards of public health and safety, and protecting the environment.*

*The establishment of the Regulatory Cooperation Council in no way diminishes the sovereignty of Canada or the U.S., with each government continuing to carry out its regulatory functions according to its domestic legal and policy requirements.*

*As the work of the RCC gets under way, more information will be made available to Canadians. For more information on the RCC, please consult [Backgrounder - Regulatory Cooperation Council Statement on Regulatory Cooperation](#).*

### ***Public consultation process***

*The Government of Canada, through the Beyond the Border Working Group, is committed to consulting with Canadians on the declaration on a shared vision for perimeter security and economic competitiveness. Priorities identified through public consultations will help shape the action plan, which will contain initiatives aimed at securing the two countries' common border while developing job-producing and prosperity-enhancing trade between them.*

*Submissions and comments on ways to strengthen collaboration in the four key areas of cooperation can be made online at [www.borderactionplan.gc.ca](http://www.borderactionplan.gc.ca). The public consultation period is scheduled to run between March 13 and April 21, 2011.*

