

WHY THE WACO PAC

FIVE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE SECURITY

The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, signed in March 2005 by Canada, Mexico and the United States, has a familiar sound and feel. It's remarkably like the North American Security and Prosperity Agenda launched in January of 2003 by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE), Canada's premier big-business lobby group. Security, Canadians are being told, trumps all other concerns: if we want the border to stay open, we will have to help build a security perimeter around North America and support the U.S.'s military, energy and economic interests abroad. The pact signed in Waco, Texas is, in effect, the political "good housekeeping seal of approval" for a new "big idea" engineered to please the corporate sector of all three countries. It contains no concrete action to improve the lives of the continent's ordinary citizens.

Canadians are good neighbours and want to work with the Americans to ensure the safety of their citizens and our own at our shared borders. But the proposals in the Waco pact go too far. Canadians must say no.

Here are five reasons why Canadians should oppose this initiative:

1 The closer we are to the Bush administration's security agenda, the harder it will be to maintain an independent foreign policy. While public opinion forced Paul Martin to refuse participation in missile defence, CCCE head Tom d'Aquino says missile defence should be revived in a future Parliament.

2 Canadians' civil and human rights will be compromised by further harmonization with the U.S. The Safe Third Country Agreement, signed by the U.S. and Canada in December 2004, requires Canada to turn back any refugee claimants who enter the country through the U.S. Anti-terrorism legislation as well as "security certificates" allow the government to detain non-citizens on the basis of secret evidence. The new Partnership would go much further with its biometric identification and a North American common entry system, further jeopardizing Canadians' civil rights.



Credit: Abelin Macdonald's

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AND PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP OF NORTH AMERICA

3 **Canada will lose what little control we have left over our energy supplies.** The Partnership calls for an energy security pact that will cement a continental energy regime, ensuring that Canada will lose what little control we have left over our oil and natural gas. It would also open the door to an integrated electricity grid. Remember the “great blackout” of August 2003? There could be more with an integrated grid.

4 **It could open the door to a continental water market.** While water is not mentioned in the pact, it is clearly on the table. In leaked minutes of an October 2004 meeting of the Task Force on the Future of North America, co-sponsored by the CCCE, the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations and the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations, participants (including Tom d’Aquino and John Manley) agreed that “no item, including Canadian water... is ‘off the table’... but it will simply require more time to ripen politically.”

5 **A North American trade bloc could put Canadian social programs on the chopping block.** The CCCE recommends many steps that would set the scene for a North American trade bloc; they include requiring a common passport and tariffs and treating all North American citizens as domestic investors in each country. Under this scenario, Canada would most surely lose its NAFTA exemptions for health, education and social security.

Canadians are good neighbours and want to work with the Americans to ensure the safety of their citizens and our own at our shared borders. But the proposals in the Waco pact go too far. Canadians must say no. For more information on how to take action on North American integration, please visit our website (www.canadians.org), and click on “Integrate This!”

In October 2004, The Council of Canadians launched *Crossing the Line: A Citizens' Inquiry on Canada-U.S. Relations*, a 10-city consultation on the future of North American political and economic integration. During the Citizens' Inquiry, people overwhelmingly rejected “deep integration” with the United States. They urged the federal government to stand up for Canadian sovereignty by protecting social programs, promoting energy conservation, maintaining independent testing procedures for food and drugs, safeguarding Canadian culture, protecting our water, promoting peace, and rejecting unjust wars. A full report of the Citizens' Inquiry will be available next fall. Watch for a preview in the next issue of *Canadian Perspectives*.

Maude Barlow is National Chairperson of The Council of Canadians and author of *Too Close for Comfort: Canada's Future in Fortress North America*, to be published this fall.