



BORDER POLICY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE



The changing dynamics of the Canada – US border/relationship

Laurie Trautman, PhD

*Director, Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University
Global Fellow, Woodrow Wilson Center & Canadian Global Affairs Institute*

“Let the 5,000-mile border between Canada and the United States stand as a symbol for the future. No soldier stands guard to protect it. Barbed wire does not deface it. And no invisible barrier of economic suspicion and fear will extend it. Let it forever be not a point of division but a meeting place between our great and true friends.”

-President Ronald Reagan, 1988

"Gang members, smugglers, human traffickers, and illicit drugs of all kinds have poured across our borders and into our communities. Canada has played a central role in these challenges, including by failing to devote sufficient attention and resources or meaningfully coordinate with US law enforcement partners to effectively stem the tide of illicit drugs."

-President Donald Trump, 2025

Where are we?
How did we get here?
What do we do now!?

Outline

1. Background on border policy
2. The great disruptors: Trump 1.0, Covid, Trump 2.0
3. Current state of Canada – US border relationship
4. What's at stake and what are we doing about it

The longest land border in the world (8,800 km)



The Border: Here, there, and everywhere



WRM-1057

Perimeter approach to border management/security

North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) (1958)



Preclearance in air mode (1952)



Post 9/11 Era: Expansion of the perimeter approach

- Trusted Traders & Travelers
 - FAST for cargo
 - NEXUS for passengers
- Preclearance expansion- land, marine, and rail
- Expansion of joint enforcement programs

*CA and US developed innovative ways of sharing intelligence and integrating our border policies, all based on strong relationship of **trust***



Shiprider (2002)

Beyond the Border Accord (2011)

*“We intend to pursue a **perimeter** approach to security, working together within, at, and away from the borders of our two countries to enhance our security and accelerate the legitimate flow of people, goods, and services between our two countries.”*

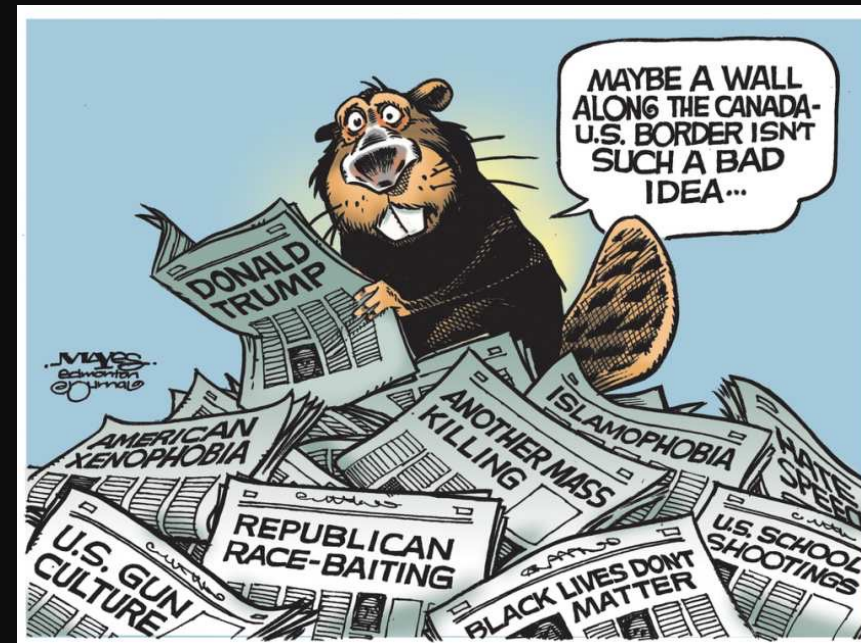
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“There’s a special place in hell for any foreign leader that engages in bad-faith diplomacy with President Donald J. Trump and then tries to stab him in the back on the way out the door. To my friends in Canada, that was one of the worst political miscalculations of the Canadian leader in modern Canadian history.”

-White House trade advisor Peter Navarro (2018)



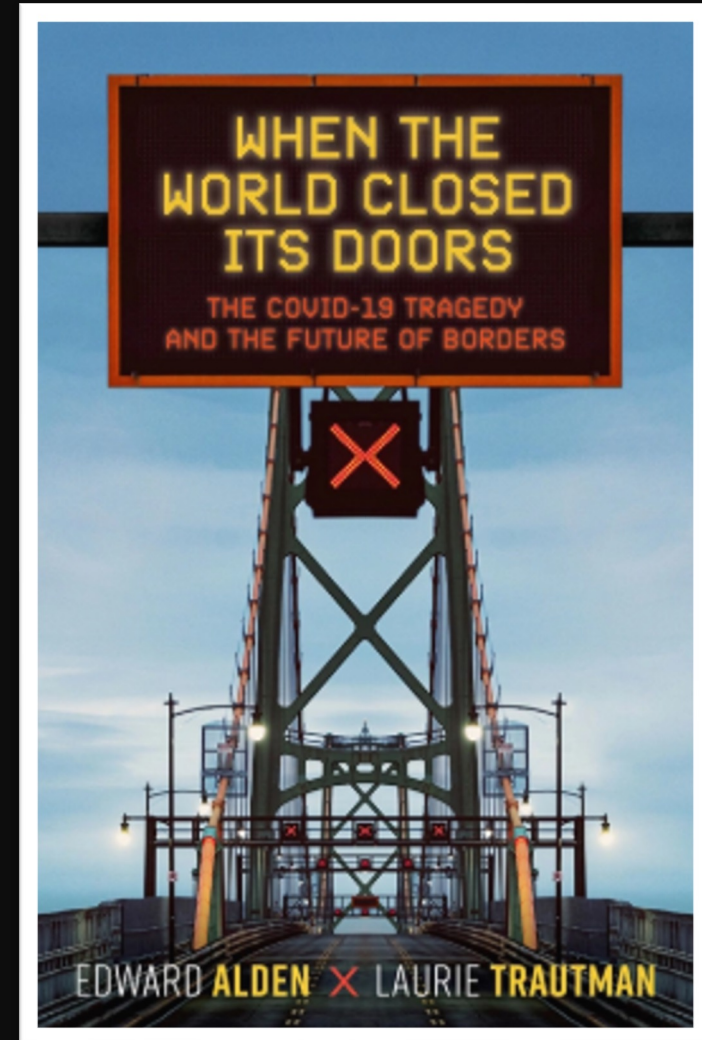
'Closing' the world's longest border

- Canada and the US have a strong history of integrated and collaborative border management, yet very different approaches to the pandemic
- "Jointly" implemented border restrictions on non-essential travel were renewed (more or less) bilaterally for ~16 months
- Unaligned, largely uncoordinated, and somehow informed by different versions of science (?)
 - Different test requirements, accepted vaccines
 - Complete absence of

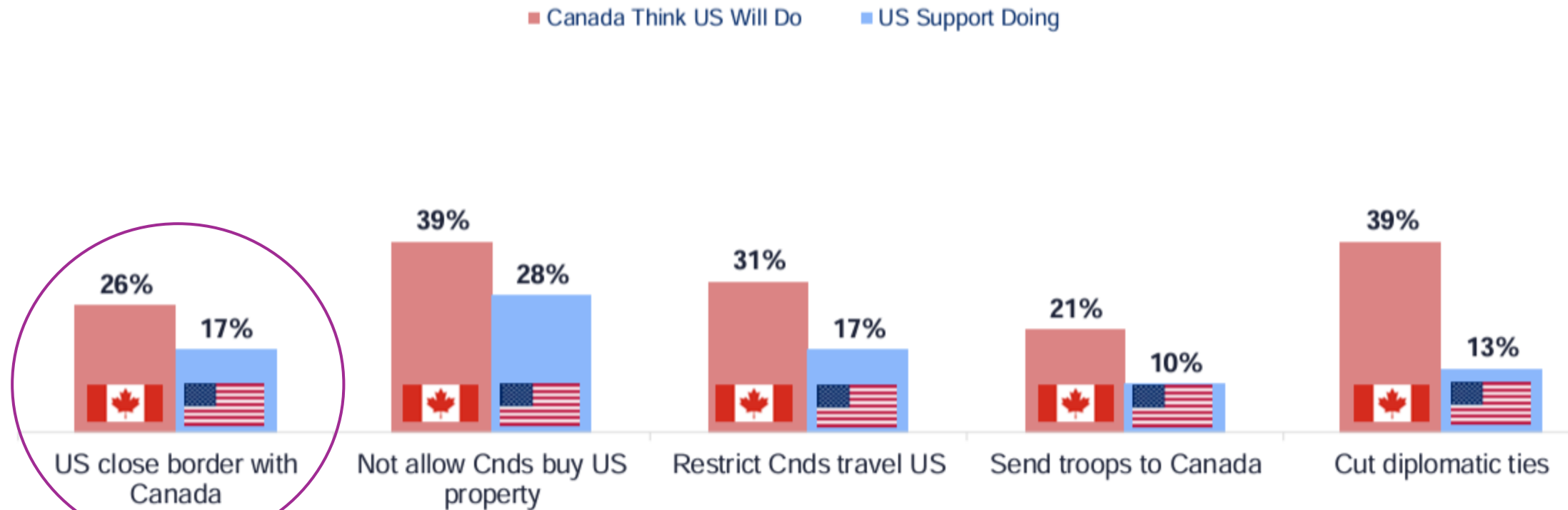
Canadian Ambassador to the US:

“we both are also committed to making decisions based on science, and the advice of experts, and those are *our* experts, *our* science... *our* country.”

Covid pandemic laid the groundwork for the normalization of borders as a policy response to an increasing diversity of 'emergencies'



What next? Reactions to some worst-case scenarios



March 5-8, 2025, n=3300 Canada, n=1000 US, n=800 Canadian Business

Legal warning on US pandemic-era policy toward asylum claims (3 years)

"Doubtless, many lessons can be learned from this chapter in our history, and hopefully serious efforts will be made to study it. One lesson might be this: Fear and the desire for safety are powerful forces. They can lead to a clamor for action—almost any action—as long as someone does something to address a perceived threat...."

"The current border crisis is not a Covid crisis..." but rather is "...an emergency decree designed for one crisis in order to address an entirely different one...But if emergency decrees promise to solve some problems, they threaten to generate others. And rule by indefinite emergency edict risks leaving all of us with a shell of a democracy and civil liberties just as hollow."

-Justice Gorsuch, Supreme Court ruling (May 2023)

Immigration and Border Security



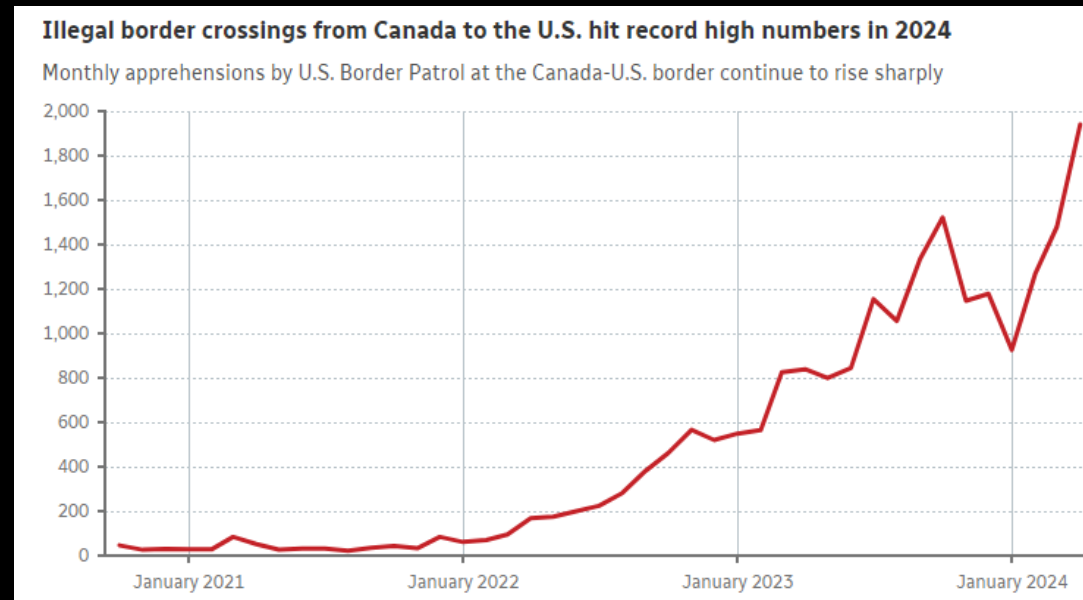
“We don’t talk enough about the northern border... We will do a wall. We will do any sort of border patrol that we need to have on there. Whatever it takes to keep people out that are illegal from coming in, we will do it.”

-Nikki Haley (2024)

NBC Jan. 2024

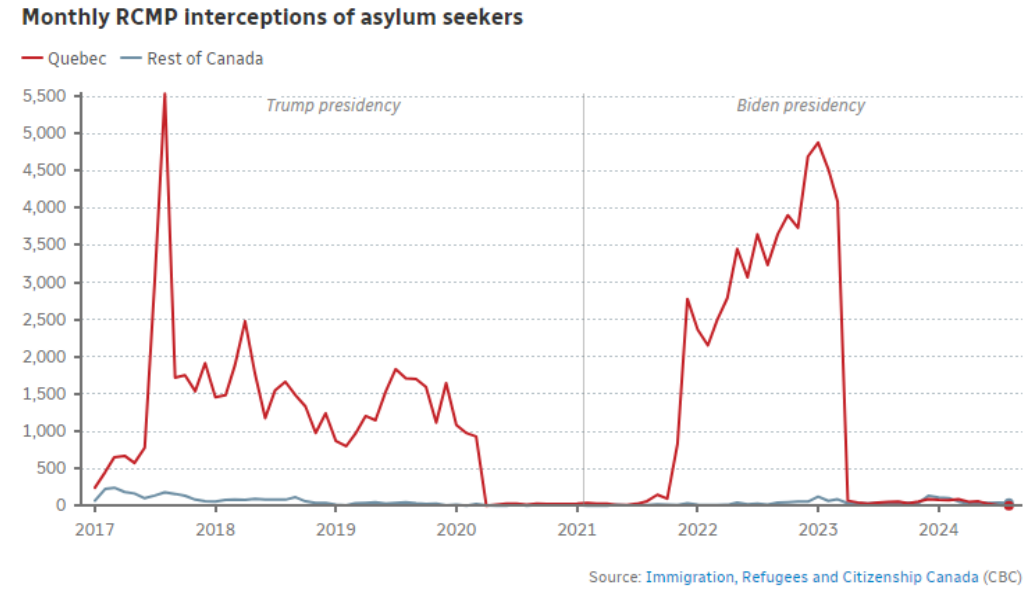


NYT Jan. 2024



CBC News

Immigration and Border Security



Canada prepares for a rise in border crossings with threat of mass deportations under Trump

Majority crossed at Quebec's Roxham Road after 2017. Community groups are readying for another increase

Benjamin Shingler · CBC News · Posted: Nov 07, 2024 8:52 AM PST | Last Updated: November 7



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US – Canada Trade War



US Tariffs

- Ongoing stalls investment
- Mostly US
- 10% on electronics
- 25% on services
- Ongoing tariffs ~9%

er –tariffs

SMCA

on auto
American

ersonal

The border is thickening in *both directions*

- Canada – US relations
 - 50% of Canadians polled approach the U.S. as a threat to national interests, 13% consider the US an enemy
- '51st state' rhetoric
 - Increasing anti-American sentiment
 - Buy Canadian and boycott US travel
- Changing nature of border enforcement
- Travel by Canadians down 32% (March)

Can we undo the damage to a Canadian 'friend betrayed'?



Graffiti in Calgary, Alberta expresses Canadians' anger about actions of the Trump Administration. (Photo by Gavin Young/Postmedia)



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Why does the border matter?



\$18 billion bilateral trade



Shared natural environment



Innovation ecosystem, integrated supply chains



Families & Friends

2026 FIFA Men's World Cup Games



What can we do to respond?

- Lessons learned during Covid
 - Information sharing (data, firsthand knowledge)
 - Keep stakeholders informed and engaged
 - Pivot to domestic markets (tourism or trade)
- Focus on small wins
- Engage in efforts that bring benefits to both sides of border
 - Longer term planning and shared goals that we should not lose sight of during the chaos
 - FIFA World Cup Games
- Time for regional, community-based solutions
- **Soft diplomacy*

Americans, Canadians shake hands at the border in show of 'longstanding friendship'

The next 'Peace, Love and a Handshake' gathering is April 12 at Peace Arch Park

April 10, 2025 9:00 p.m.



People line up for a hockey-style handshake at Peace Arch Park. The Peace, Love and a Handshake gatherings are a tangible reminder that Americans still support their northern neighbors and want to build connection. (Photo courtesy of Jeff Smith)



Haskell Infrastructure Overhaul

\$186,722 CAD raised of \$100,000 goal • 2.9K donations

[Donate now](#)

 gofundme

Even in the best of times, cross-border collaboration is challenging...



...In the worst of times, it's absolutely essential

Thank You

Laurie.Trautman@wwu.edu

<https://bpri.wwu.edu/>

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