

Media Breakfast Briefing on President Obama's Trip to Canada
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
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(List of presenters and guests at end of document)

David Biette:

Okay, I think we'll get going now. Good morning. My name is David Biette. I'm the director of the Canada Institute here at the Woodrow Wilson Center. It's my pleasure to welcome you to today's briefing that's put on by our Communications and Outreach Office and the Canada Institute.

The Wilson Center isn't always well known in Washington, so let me give you a few words about who we are and what we do. The Wilson Center was founded by the Congress in 1968 as the official memorial to the 28th president. Woodrow Wilson is our only president with a Ph.D. Having been president of Princeton and governor of New Jersey, he had long interest in policy and policy making, and felt that policy makers and academics and other people didn't talk to each other about policy as much as they should. So, essentially, that's what we do here. We bring people together for dialogue. We do not take policy positions, and we do get funding from the Congress, so it probably wouldn't go over well on the Hill if we did. But we like to get ideas together and people talking about things. The Center is a public-private partnership. We have an annual appropriation from the Congress. We have about 22 programs that look at different areas of the world and different topics, from environmental change and security to the Canada Institute. We have about 20 fellows and 30 scholars at one time, and a staff of about 150. And we -- as you probably know, our president and director, Lee Hamilton, he's often in the news, and he sets the tone here and it's very much a non-partisan, great discussion.

So the Canada Institute was founded in 2000. I've been here since 2001. Our mission is to increase awareness and knowledge about Canada and Canada-U.S. issues among U.S. policy makers and opinion leaders. We have generous support from the corporate sector, with some additional support from the government of Canada, the government of Quebec, and some other groups. We focus primarily on three areas: trade issues, border and border security issues, and energy and environment, although we do other things from time to time too. And that we try to get Americans to pay a little more attention to Canada and know what it is they're talking about, which is why we're doing today's program. We do about 10 to 15 programs a year here and a couple in Canada. We also have a series of publications called *One Issue, Two Voices*. Some of them are in your packet. Our latest one is on water, the issue of water abundance in Canada and the United States. We take one issue, we have a Canadian look at it and an American look at it, 2500 words, and they answer each other. It's sort of brief, to the point. We get sort of well known authors and a variety of topics. There's trade, security, other things out there. And if you'd like more, they're on the Web in pdf, and we're happy to give you hard copies. The folks, our friends from the Canadian embassy, have handed out some of their materials as well, giving you some information on Canadian trade and the other issues in the relationship.

So for today's program we have Paul Frazer and Jodi White. On my left, Jodi White just stepped down as president of the Public Policy Forum in Ottawa, and she's with us for several months as a public policy scholar here at the Wilson Center. Paul Frazer has a long biography, as does Jodi, but Paul works with mCapitol Management here on issues in Canada-U.S. relations. He is the former Canadian ambassador to the Czech and Slovak Republics. And their extensive biographies are in your packets. We will do brief presentations this morning, because we'd like it to be more

questions from you than us telling you what you ought to know. So I'm going to start with Paul, I guess.

Paul Frazer:

Thank you very much, David. And thank you very much, everyone, for attending today. Jodi and I certainly look forward to your questions and comments. My brief remarks really would relate to the mission of the Canada Institute and how that actually overlaps nicely with this visit of the president to Canada, in that the key issues do relate to the economy. And when I say the economy, it's not only the present crisis that we are all facing, but also the very complex trade relationship and the whole set of issues relating to economic and security matters at the Canada-U.S. border. And then there is the nexus of energy and climate change. Each of these three, in their broadest terms and in many detailed ways, we can presume will be very much part of the agenda when the two leaders meet. And a word about the meeting itself, in terms of why any of this is important, other than what your documentation that you have today will set out starkly, which is at stake, in part one key figure -- because jobs, jobs, jobs are very much the mantra not only in this country but very much in Canada. Seven million jobs in this country are related directly to the economic relationship between Canada and the United States, and of course a core group of x million jobs in Canada as well. And although the figures may vary between 36 and 37 states in the union which rely on their respective economic well-being for trade with Canada, you can then see quickly the dimension of what is at stake as the two countries try to work through the present challenges.

It is extremely important that the two leaders meet. The president on his first foreign visit will be working through a number of basic aspects of that whole experience, but he's now a member of a club. He's a member of a club of heads of state, heads of government, and as he meets with Prime Minister Harper, it's an opportunity for the two to get a measure of each other face to face, to establish a rapport, and we hope a very long-standing, constructive relationship, and that is something that we shouldn't undercut as a very important factor or feature of a visit as well as an ongoing benefit of such a visit.

Beyond the bilateral, of course, there will be multi-lateral or international issues. Again, you could probably put them on the back of an envelope, but certainly the president will be looking to speak with the prime minister about Canada's own experience in Afghanistan, not only the contributions that have been made but the experience that has been gained from that. The prime minister and the president, of course, are heading governments of countries that are members of the G7-G8. They will be at meetings together of that group, and of course the G20 meeting in April, which is going to be one of the next major opportunities for them to come together at, as well as the NATO Heads of Government. So this an opportunity for discussion of very critical issues to the two countries' interests, but also issues that, if the two countries can demonstrate concrete and constructive efforts to help solve the problems, that too can serve in the multi-lateral and global context as well. Thank you.

David Biette:

Jodi?

Jodi White:

Well, I think all else I want to say really is that I think Canadians see this as a very important signal that this first visit is coming to Canada. As you will know, that has historically been the case in the past. It wasn't the case when President Bush -- and Canadians probably felt the snub, perhaps more than others should or they should. Certainly the relationship with the United States

is obviously our most important relationship internationally. Obviously the United States has many important relationships, but I think this trip is a signal of the importance that Canada is as a neighbor and a partner in so many ways. As Paul said, the economies are very integrated, and I think that has become more clear in the last number of months, perhaps to all of us, than previous, just because of the troubles that both economies are going through, and looking at issues such as Buy America, where it became much more clear, the complexities of that, that that is not a simple policy at all, besides the arguments you can make against it in terms of protectionism, et cetera.

As you know, there was an election in Canada in the fall. Prime Minister Harper was returned with another minority government, and he brought down a budget at the end of January, a budget that really, in many ways, has a lot of similarities to the stimulus bill. There's many things in the Canadian budget in January that are quite similar to what has been just passed in terms of the stimulus bill. And I think that really comes out of things like the G20 meeting, where all of the countries together were talking about working in cooperation and collaboration on these major issues. So that's really all I wanted to say.

David Biette:

All right, questions?

[Low audio]

Why don't we -- since it's being recorded, could we use the microphone, if you don't mind? We'll try to get to you quickly. Could you identify yourself too, please?

Mike Dorning:

Mike Dorning, *Chicago Tribune*. Let me start with just the simplest one. What's been in the news lately is the controversy over the Buy America provisions on the stimulus bill. As everyone knows, there was an adjustment made when it was passed on Friday, which says, as I understand it, essentially "buy American, but don't break international trade agreements." Where does that leave the disagreements between the Canadian government and the U.S. government? And what are potential facets of that that would come up between the two countries in this "get to know you" session on Thursday?

Jodi White:

Well, there's no doubt in my mind, I mean, it will be on the agenda. I'm sure the agenda's going to start with the global financial crisis, basically, in terms of the conversation. But I think on the Buy America, presumably that will certainly be raised by Canada. And I know our embassy, for instance, continues to work on that in terms of what's happened in the bill, and are being very vigilant on it. And I think the prime minister presumably will raise it and make it clear. And I think the signals have been, in fact, that the president understands the issues and the concerns. And as I say, some of the problem is just the integration of the economies. You can't -- there is not a curtain you can put down in terms of Buy America with so many of the products going back and forth across the border several times -- as they're manufactured, in fact.

Mike Dorning:

So, what do they want the president to do? [Inaudible] What are they going to ask him to do [inaudible]?

Jodi White:

Well, I'm not sure what they're going to ask specifically. But obviously they're going to try to protect Canadian trade and the Canadian economy in terms of the importance of our trade with America. And so that will very much be the message in terms of not looking at protectionist measures. And I think that's where we feel, in terms of our message, that the president and others are hearing that, as it is that they too agree that the future for the world is not to go back into protectionism.

Mike Dorning:

Is there anything [inaudible] specifically in Canada people are hoping to get out of this [inaudible]?

Paul Frazer:

Well, I think that also what Canadians are coming to grips with as well is that the president is very important, but one player in the overall equation. And as Jodi mentioned, the importance of being vigilant also means that Canadians, through the embassy and through Canadian business, have to be working with members of Congress, both the Senate and the House, to insure that those various members have a clear understanding of the nature of the bilateral relationship, this integrated aspect of the two economies. Since the free trade agreement between the two countries and then subsequently the NAFTA, the economies have become increasingly -- not just integrated, but the situation is far more complex. For example, when the primary debates were held in Ohio and the issue of NAFTA emerged, I don't think anybody there in the room appreciated it that at that time Ohio had an approximately \$4.2 billion trade surplus in its economic and trade relationship with Canada. That's probably changed for both parties since the onset of this recession, but I think those are important realities to keep in mind. The president himself comes from a northern border state. Illinois has a very strong trade and economic relationship, beneficial, with Canada. So I think that as more and more people are informed of these realities, of these basic facts, then I think an approach to -- not protectionism, but an approach to how do we make this work better, so that we can maintain our competitiveness, or certainly not slip further back in our economic well being. I think that's what will be an ongoing goal.

David Biette:

There's concern about NAFTA as well. Certainly from the primaries that's been in the minds of Canadians. And there's been off again/on again attention to NAFTA, what's going to happen to NAFTA. But its benefits -- Canadian's benefits -- our economies, as Paul and Jodi both said, they're integrated. You can't just chop one in half and say be done with it. You know, we're two together. And messing with NAFTA could mess with the economy.

Here?

[Unintelligible]

Ed Chen:

Good morning. Ed Chen of Bloomberg News. Could you, either of your or both, briefly describe the Canadian experience in Afghanistan, and what Prime Minister Harper is likely to tell President Obama? And what is the Canadian commitment forward? I believe it's to 2011, but perhaps beyond?

Paul Frazer:

Well, I think that one of the points of common interest for both the United States and Canada is the importance of getting more NATO members involved in those areas of the country that are most requiring of it. Canada and the United States and others have certainly given in terms of people who have served and died or are badly wounded. But also the issue of the development of the country, I think that as the president and his advisors are examining the role of the United States as a NATO country in Afghanistan, so Canada is constantly reviewing what it's doing, why it's doing it. It does have a commitment to 2011. Who can guess what will come before or after that period of time? But I think we're in a phase now where all NATO members involved in Afghanistan are taking a close look at experience to date. And I think that NATO Heads of Government meeting that is forthcoming will be very important, both on the commitment side as well as on a sharing of experience kind of discussion around the table on what should be done now and what happens going forward.

Jodi White:

The prime minister appointed a commission about a year ago, a little over a year ago, to look at Afghanistan. I mean, they had a very short time frame. I believe it may have only been about three or four months, because it was becoming, you know, more and more talked about. And some of what the commission had to say was they certainly supported the mission, but felt quite strongly that on the development side there was disappointment, and that, you know, frustration both for the defense forces that were there, who felt they weren't able to do the development that they wanted to, and that everyone's seeing. And I think this is known by all countries. How do we get to that stage of this and beyond where we're losing men and women in the armed forces? And so that continues to be a commitment and a focus for the Canadians. But I think a very determined decision to withdraw troops in 2011, definitely -- obviously conversations may happen sometime between now and then about that. I suspect it would have to go for a parliamentary vote if there were to be an extension. So there'd have to be some debate in Canada.

Paul Frazer:

Also, I'm going to say there's a lot of awareness in Canada about their war dead as well. The pictures are taken -- it's on today's paper that the president's considered lifting the ban on taking photos at Dover so that Americans could see the caskets coming back. That might change the game here, and make it more like what's in Canada, because each person that comes in Canada, it's very much paid attention to. And we tend not to anymore because we don't see it.

Ed Chen:

So in other -- so, right now, then, Harper and Obama are probably on the same page on Afghanistan.

Jodi White:

I would think pretty close, basically. I mean, he's obviously looking at increasing the troops and going in there. And everyone is much more focused on that, I think, in the world. So I would say yes.

Alex Varty:

Good morning. I'm from Russian Embassy, Alex Varty [spelled phonetically]. And I had a question. Do you expect any agreements between two countries concerning the status of Northwest Passage at this time?

Paul Frazer:

I think it's agree to disagree is the ongoing status. As they both, and other polar governments, look at just what is evolving there, what is developing in that area -- and we are guessing now, we have some indication of impact, but there's still a long way to go. You saw not long ago, at the very end of the Bush administration, announcements with respect to the Arctic, as well as now there is a greater sense in this town, I think, that on a long list of things that can be done, perhaps the United States sooner rather than later will sign on to Law of the Sea, and that will have other implications. But I think --

Jodi White:

Yeah, I think part of the conversation is going to be on energy security and the environment, probably together. I think there's quite an interesting conversation for Canada and the U.S. to have. And the Arctic comes into that a little bit. And so I don't think anyone sees this meeting as something that's going to have agreements signed out of it. I think this is the beginning of a conversation between a new president and the government in Canada, and the beginning of a relationship where they're trying to build on a number of issues. So it may be a topic, but I agree with Paul, I don't think there will be any change there.

Paul Frazer:

I think it's well to keep in mind that in these visits, especially one of really a business day, that each side has to be careful not to come with a laundry list of things to deal with. Then you lose the focus. This is but a first meeting. There will be other occasions, certainly. Canadian and American leaders tend to get together more frequently in other ways, whether it's on the margins, if you will, of multi-lateral meetings, but also telephone conversations. And we also are fortunate in that we have an extremely valuable relationship between the public servants in both countries, and so much of the daily work that has to be done is handled very effectively that way. So the meeting is going to have a focus, and they're really limited in how many different things they can actually discuss in any detail.

Jodi White:

It's my understanding that Lawrence Summers and Carol Browner will be going with the president. So that gives a signal, to a certain extent, of where the conversation is going to be.

David Biette:

We have a question over here?

Alexander Duncan:

Hi, Alexander Duncan with *Platts*. I just wanted to ask, when it comes to energy and climate change issues, what sorts of commitments is Prime Minister Harper looking to get out of President Obama?

Jodi White:

On that whole topic?

Alexander Duncan:

In terms of a seat at the table, perhaps on some of these issues, if you could talk to that, please?

Paul Frazer:

With respect to energy alone -- and, well, of course here we talk as they do in Canada, energy climate change. And I think for the discussion in Ottawa, part of the objective really will be to get

a better sense of what the president is interested in moving on, what timetable, and where he's going to move first. And we all know that the House Energy and Commerce Committee is seized with writing -- preparing a bill that will deal very much with cap and trade. There'll be an opportunity in Ottawa to discuss some of the merits of cap and trade as opposed to carbon tax, but I think that in part this will be a listening session and an opportunity for each side to give their sense of what their broader -- and maybe a bit more on the detailed objectives. Because whatever happens here, because of that integrated nature of the economies, particularly on the energy side, so much is at stake that Canada and the United States will want to move not in lock step, but with some healthy sense of what each other's time frame is and what their objectives are.

David Biette:

And Canada's adjusting to -- we all are -- a new administration with new priorities. And all those priorities aren't out yet. And I think this is a chance for them, the Canadians, to hear a little more what the American priorities are, so that, as Paul said, we can work together on things that we need to. As the economies are integrated, this is, as Jodi mentioned -- there's not a wall between the economies. There's not a wall between the air either. I mean, we saw that with acid rain. We need to work together on these things.

Male Speaker:

What sorts of commitments when it comes to the oil sands? That's certainly a big issue.

Jodi White:

Well, yes it is, but I think I'd go back to my comment that this is the start of a conversation and a new relationship. You know, we are a huge energy supplier to the United States. Both sides know that. The oil sands are one of the places where a lot of that oil is produced. And there is work going on, on the environmental side in terms of the oil sands. And I think what Canadians want to see, probably, is a commitment to an ongoing conversation. I would say that that's the commitment we want. You know, there's not going to be final details out of this conversation. On both sides there's a lot of work to be done on where we all want to go on climate change. And obviously an energy producer has some specific things that you have to take into account in terms of the economy. So I think Canadians would see it as a success if they saw a process starting where there was an ongoing conversation and collaboration on these issues. And really the Harper government has signaled that. On several occasions when they've talked about the environment, they've indicated they wanted to have conversations with the new administration and see where they were going on things.

Evan Lehmann:

Do you mean [inaudible] Obama administration for current use of energy --

David Biette:

Could you back up and use the microphone, because this is being recorded and say who you are, please?

Evan Lehmann:

Hi, I'm Evan Lehmann with ClimateWire. When you say ongoing conversation, do you mean that the Canadians would perhaps like a pledge from Obama on the current use of oil sands energy, or additional use of energy, or perhaps -- and do you think that they could talk about the intensity targets that Canada has? And perhaps, do you think it will get detailed, the conversation, in terms of changing that?

Jodi White:

Yeah, I don't think this conversation is going to get that detailed, probably. But I think, you know, you may well see for instance conversations with the new Minister of the Environment in Canada, Jim Prentice, fairly quickly after the visit; in other words, that this starts the conversation. I don't think you can expect these two leaders to get into that when it's a short working visit and they're trying to cover a lot, again, to establish really a rapport more than anything.

Paul Frazer:

These visits provide a very important opportunity for two leaders to send signals from the top down through their respective systems: "This is the direction we want to go in, this is what we've agreed to pursue. Here, perhaps, is a timeframe, let's get on with it." I think, in keeping with what Jodi has said, that this is the beginning of something. And it's very, very much in keeping with the kind of process that Canadian and American leaders have put into place over time.

Paul Johnson:

Hi, Paul Johnson from Global TV. I ask if you could speculate for a second here. Paul, you described this as being a chance for these two leaders to size each other up and to begin an ongoing conversation. What do you think the tone and the style of their relationship is going to be like going forward? How will that be different from the Harper-Bush relationship? Do you think these guys are going to like each other? What do you think the biggest areas of disagreement will be? What's this going to look like?

Paul Frazer:

That's quite a complex question. I think that, first of all, you've got two leaders who want to work together. I think everyone here knows that, in Canada, President Obama is extremely popular. I think the kind of conversation that Jodi has outlined, the nature of that is something that Canadians want to see. They want to see a very constructive relationship. Remember, we also have two sports enthusiasts. The prime minister is finishing up a book on hockey, as I understand it. And that's another -- in terms of rapport, we know these are multidimensional people. They don't want to talk only the issues of government at every moment. There may be an opportunity during lunch, or later in the relationship, just to get to know each other better over time. And they will do that. So I think that there is everything to point to a very positive kind of relationship that is really just beginning. And as I mentioned earlier, the president is now a member of a club. And we've seen it many, many times, that that in itself has some meaning to the participants. And I think he's very interested, the president is very interested in drawing upon the prime minister's experience. The prime minister has put his hand in the political fire many times now on very important issues, both national and international, particularly with respect to Afghanistan. And I think the president wants to get a measure of that. And I think that will be part of what will continue.

David Jackson:

David Jackson, *USA Today*. Canada is scheduled to pull out of Afghanistan in 2011, is that right? Do you see that changing? And also, do you see them increasing the amount of economic assistance to the country?

Jodi White:

Well, it's now our number one receiver of economic assistance. There's more aid going into Afghanistan from Canada than to any other country. So I'm not sure if it'll increase or not. I mean, that -- just to put it in perspective, it's already there. And on 2011, that would be a debate

that really the country has to hold, and I think the prime minister realizes that. I think that, you know, if events happened that it made sense that Canada stay in, then there would probably be a parliamentary debate or some kind of thing about it. So I have no idea how that would go. But, you know, it's at the moment a very definitive date for withdrawal.

David Jackson:

How controversial is the war in Canada?

Jodi White:

It is and it isn't. We've had quite a number of men and women die in Afghanistan, and so that makes it -- you suddenly then have, you know, a population that very much wants to support the troops that are there and not look like we're cutting and running on people who have given their lives, frankly. So I would say, you know, there's some questions about it, but great support for the troops. And therefore -- and the prime minister's very committed, and I think that brings the country along. I mean, if you go out and do polling on any of these kinds of things, you can get some negative numbers on, "Are you pleased you're at war," or something, but I think Canadians are satisfied with the government's leadership on this and understand the importance of it.

David Jackson:

Thank you.

Male Speaker:

[Inaudible]

Mitch Potter:

Hi, Mitch Potter, *Toronto Star*. I wonder if the panel could speak a bit to the question of how much a factor the relative fragility of the Canadian government is. There's a lot of talk here about this just being the beginning. How confident can team Obama be that the middle and the end, the years to come, will be with this same partner?

Jodi White:

Well, I don't think anybody ever knows in a minority parliamentary situation. So I don't think -- I don't imagine they're playing chess on this. You deal with who's across the table from you, and you assume that you can build a relationship. And if that changes sometime down the road, you perhaps then change or have to get -- build another relationship, but, you know, people are aware of the fragility of all minority governments but this one has been fragile for a couple of years and is still there, so I think, you know -- and that's in some ways why I think the Prime Minister sees this as a great opportunity to really try to build this relationship and do something. I think he knows that Canada wants to see some signals that he's building a relationship and I think he sees it as, as something that would be very positive for him so he's going to put a lot into it.

David Biette:

And he can build -- I mean, as we said before, Bush was not very popular in Canada, Obama is very popular and it gives the Prime Minister a little more leeway to be more friendly with the American head of state than his predecessor. But as Jodi said, you work with who you've got. You don't wish a change coming along. You -- this issue is to be dealt with and you deal with them and you deal with who's in front of you.

Back here?

Paul Hunter:

Oh, I've got the mic. It's Paul Hunter with CBC. Just on the relationship between the two, does it actually make a difference? I mean, you've got -- you have had presidents and prime ministers that have not liked each other, and you have had couplings that have gotten along famously, and I suspect if you did a graph over the years, you'd see trade always increasing. Like, what difference does it make whether they get along or not?

Paul Frazer:

Well, Jodi as well, we have witnessed in the room when, when political leaders get together, it -- the fact that they get along well and it's -- it simply facilitates the dealings with the more difficult aspects of a relationship, those aspects that crop up or emerge suddenly that enable someone to have a sense of where the other one is coming from. It's a chance to, as well, if the two get along well, it's reflected in the manner in which cabinet secretaries meet and get along, it's reflected in the pace at which certain things are moved forward. It's abstract, there's no question, but we have observed it and many will have observed it over time. It doesn't mean that everything is going to be perfect. It doesn't mean that no problems emerge. After all, we're talking about the pursuit and protection of national interests, and no leader can risk forgetting or ignoring that core fact; that is, his or her core mission in terms of the job at hand. So it's, it's a matter of how you can, sometimes how you can better deal with the nastier or the more difficult or the more aggravating aspects of a relationship, so that it tends to affect the kind of response or reaction to a problem as well.

Jodi White:

I think relationships are profoundly important in politics and in diplomacy, and you just can't get around it. I mean, yes, sometimes if you don't like the guy or the woman and there's no chemistry, you can still do your business. But when there is some chemistry, and you've developed an ability to chat more and understand each other's perspective, I think then there's much more possibility of involving yourself in other parts of it. And I go back a little bit to the Mulroneys -- Reagan and Mulroneys, Bush relationships. I mean, I think Mulroneys had a profound effect on President Bush in the first Iraq war going to the U.N., and was able to talk to him quite directly because there was a very strong relationship, where if there isn't and we look like the little guy up north, you can't make those phone calls sometimes. But I think getting yourself into a relationship where there is a back and forth and a real dialogue can move Canada into having some influence on not just our bilateral issues. We will always have a list of, you know, what is wrong with the relationship or what issues we need to have tackled. But I think Canada has another reputation throughout the world, and we can use that and help the United States sometimes with that. But that, a lot of times, depends on chemistry and getting a relationship right so that there can be a conversation, so I think it has a profound effect.

And I think sometimes in Canada, for instance, there is occasionally a sort of anti-U.S. feeling in Canada going on, perhaps more during the Bush time obviously than at other times, but as everyone knows, that's a little bit of Canadian schizophrenia. They're our best friends but sometimes then we go, "oh, but do we really want to?" And those messages are damaging to us down here when they happen because, again, you know, the United States wants to be liked and wants to have close friends who are supporters and allies and things, and so that I do think the relationship has a great deal to do with progress on a variety of different items.

Paul Frazer:

I think, too, in that sense, that to have that very good relationship, have that rapport, it means that either leader is prepared, more likely prepared to nudge an issue where that leader is maybe

drawing upon a certain amount of political capital to get something resolved. But that extra nudge can be extremely valuable at the right moment, and if you're not engaged or you don't feel engaged, you don't have that rapport, it's a lot easier to leave things to the technical aspects or the people who have to deal with things in a more pro forma matter. But to have that extra investment by a leader goes a long way.

David Biette:

I should add, too, that having bad relationships doesn't help either. We saw that with President Bush and Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, and then if you go back further, too, that doesn't help at all. I think a neutral to a positive relationship is good, but also a negative relationship can be quite negative.

Where's the mic? Okay. Over here.

Edw Chen:

Ed Chen of Bloomberg. The questions we asked earlier about Afghanistan, could I just pose again vis-à-vis Iraq and Canada, where you are? Also, can you tell us what the casualties have been, Canadian casualties in both countries?

Jodi White:

Well, Canada isn't in Iraq and made a decision not to be there, and I think it was a very popular decision, so I didn't think there's any -- really anything more to be said. And on casualties, I think it's about 104 or something. I think it just passed the 100 mark.

Male Speaker:

In Afghanistan.

Jodi White:

One hundred and eight?

Paul Frazer:

One hundred and eight.

Jodi White:

Okay, 108 in Afghanistan.

Alexander Duncan:

Hi, Alexander Duncan with *Platts* again. You mentioned that Lawrence Summers and Carol Browner are expected to be by President Obama's side during these meetings. Who is expected to be next to Prime Minister Harper? And furthermore, in your estimation, what signal does it send that both Summers and Browner will be making this trip?

Jodi White:

Well, the signal, I think is, is that the global economic issue is going to be probably the number one topic of discussion, and secondly that environment and energy will be a second major conversation that takes place. I put energy in there obviously just because it effects the whole environmental conversation. And I'm afraid I don't know who's going to be on the Canadian side. I mean, I think, you know, you've got two ministers perhaps, and then some officials, but I just don't know what's been decided in that.

Alexander Duncan:

Okay.

Ewen MacAskill:

Ewen MacAskill from *The Guardian*. During the primary season, your NAFTA became an issue, and I just wonder what you think is going to happen. Will Obama maybe raise it and say, "Well, we need to look at this," and then nothing happens because, as you said earlier, it's too difficult to untangle? But do you think it will come up?

Paul Frazer:

I think, I think NAFTA will come up as part of an overall conversation. I'm not confident that it will come up because someone wants to change it or do anything about it at this time. I think that people will look to the strengths of NAFTA and what has been accomplished, and we all know that there's still ongoing work in terms of informing people in our respective countries about what NAFTA does and what it brings about. So I think as the two leaders talk about how they can work together to strengthen the two economies going forward, I think they don't want to do anything that would limit that ability to make progress on economic recovery. And so introducing a question mark or an unknown factor with respect to the nature of NAFTA or the future of NAFTA seems to me not something that either leader would want to do at this time. That may be something that can be left to another discussion.

David Biette:

Over here and then over here.

Mike Dorning:

Mike Dorning, *Chicago Tribune*. Yeah. My question is just a sort of a more pointed version of his question which is those of us who covered the Obama campaign heard a lot of talk in the Ohio primary about renegotiating NAFTA even though, you know, Obama wasn't going to put any threat behind his promise that he would renegotiate NAFTA. Do you see any, any willingness, any interest in the Canadian government if Obama says, "You know, I'd like to renegotiate NAFTA, but if you don't, that's okay, too." Do you see any chance of NAFTA being renegotiated? I assume there's none but, you know, tell me what you think.

Paul Frazer:

Certainly not in the short term. I just don't see the environment permitting something like that in the short term, and I think that if we look at statements made by the president subsequent to the primaries, I think the overall guiding point for both leaders is that we would -- they would want NAFTA to work well. If there's something that can be improved, if there's something that has been overlooked, perhaps they should look at it at some point. But again, I don't see the political environment providing for that. I think that it's a matter of don't throw in any more variables to the present economic mix when, as I said, I mentioned earlier, seven million jobs in this country rely very much on the economic and trade relationship with Canada, and again, a huge relative number in Canada as well. So they'll be interested in, "How do we take a closer look at what's going on in the auto industry?" for example. I mean, this is a week when the president is focusing on that more. Thousands upon thousands of jobs have been lost in Canada because of the downturn in the auto industry, and that was the first, really the first major free trade arrangement between Canada and the United States back in the '60s, and that was in autos and auto parts, and it's been a huge benefit to both countries. That's at risk, and I think it will be more looking at what's more immediately at risk than at present the broader picture of NAFTA.

Mike Dorning:

[Inaudible] some sort of element of the auto bailout program [inaudible].

Paul Frazer:

Well, Canada has -- I mean, Canada has sent its industry minister to Washington to have discussions on this matter weeks ago. Canada has allocated funding for the auto industry in Canada. There are billions of dollars in funds awaiting implementation once it's more clear how the situation here will be, will be dealt with because, again, Canada doesn't -- can't move out ahead of what's going on in this country on auto industry matters just because of the linkages, the direct linkages that exist. So there will be some discussion of that.

Mike Dorning:

In terms of what they'll be seeking in the shape of the American bailout?

Paul Frazer:

I think what everybody is seeking, including the administration, is some clarity on just what are we facing and how do we go about solving the present problems in that industry. And in Canada, Mr. Harper will certainly be able to brief the President on what Canada is doing or prepared to do as part of its overall effort. And I think it's a matter of seeing how certain collaboration in that area would be very helpful. There's some fear within the unions in Canada that there may be decisions made in the industry here that will drastically affect the job situation in the auto industry in Canada. So --

David Biette:

We'll have to see what happens today.

Paul Frazer:

They're on the cusp.

David Biette:

With Chrysler and General Motors. I mean, we're waiting for that. Canada, as we said before, it's integrated. I mean, you've got some lines, parts of some lines made in Canada and here and, of course, we want our jobs in the United States, Canadians want their jobs, but what's going to happen? We'll just have to see so that we can work together, because you can't have half a car come off a line.

To go back to NAFTA, it's also Mexico, and I think when Americans think of NAFTA they think of Mexico, they don't think of Canada. And if you open up NAFTA, I mean, there's three countries that have issues on the table. And what's Mexico's issue? It's immigration. And we have seen that we don't want to deal with that. So, and also, the issues of -- that people bring up around NAFTA are labor and environment, and those are less issues with Canada than more with Mexico. But on the other side, it's immigration. Do we want to talk about that? And I think there's enough on the table now without bringing that up. Really, enough on the table.

Jodi White:

The one issue we hadn't mentioned actually which just fits with a little bit of what you're talking about is the border and I think that will be on the table. I think there's a view in Canada that the border has thickened over the last number of years and is really quite problematic, causing economic problems and so, you know, I think that will definitely be part of the conversation. And again, I think, I think on the Canadian side we would hope that it would -- perhaps there would be

some agreement to put, you know, to upgrade what talks there are now to something maybe more institutionalized in terms of a joint border commission of some sort that can really look at the issues because -- and that's where the discussion with Mexico sometimes is problematic for Canada, only because our border issues are profoundly different from the border issues with Mexico, and I guess a little bit of a feeling that we have trouble getting that message across, and that it's not an issue of, you know, immigration and et cetera across our border. It's much more the thickening has caused a slow down economically in terms of, again, an integrated economy. So I think that will be an important part of the conversation.

Male Speaker:

Could you elaborate on slow down [unintelligible] a little bit.

Paul Frazer:

There have been any number of -- well, because of basically 9/11, needless to say, that the border was shut, as you may recall, for a few days and that brought home very clearly the interdependence that the two countries experience on a day-to-day basis, and brought home very clearly this on-time delivery, integrated manufacturing reality in the Canada-U.S. economies. You will recall as well perhaps that at that time, I believe within a few days, five assembly plants, auto assembly plants in the United States had to shut down because the parts and the various components were not coming across the border as they normally would.

Now, there's been tremendous progress in certain sectors on trying to ensure that appropriate measures from a security perspective don't harm or threaten the economic aspects of the importance of that border, and we recognize together at that time, as Canada and the United States developed an action plan on the border from a security perspective, that you cannot separate security, personal security and economic security. And I think that's a message that I think many Canadians thought had been lost in some quarters in this city over the last several years.

And then, every now and then there are things that are done that create new costs, new fees, that also contributes to what we consider or what can be considered a thickening of the border. Anything that inadvertently or by happenstance really can create blocks at the border. We're not talking about just infrastructure. The infrastructure, both governments have recognized a while ago that the infrastructure needed a huge boost to bring it to what's required in the 21st century. But there are things that are done that are not aimed at Canada but do swipe Canada. And in swiping Canada at the border you're really swiping the United States, because a hit at the border for Canada is a hit at the border for the United States because of our economic interrelationship.

Evan Lehmann:

Hi, Lehmann with *Climatewire*. Mr. Ambassador, this question is for you. Do you think that the meeting will lay the groundwork or perhaps even privately announce the ambassador to Canada?

Paul Frazer:

Wouldn't that be nice? Maybe privately. Maybe the president would feel he was ready to name a nominee, of course, who has to have Senate confirmation. I think there are many in Canada who are curious as to whether or not that will happen.

Evan Lehmann:

Who do you think it might be?

Paul Frazer:

It won't be anybody at this table.

[Laughter]

That we know.

Hugues Poulin:

Yes. Hugues Poulin from Radio-Canada TV. I would like to know about the Omar Kadar case. He is the only Canadian prisoner in Guantanamo. And so, do you think it will come up? And yesterday there was a report from the White House that President Obama will not ask other countries to take prisoners, but national countries like maybe Canada will have to take back Omar Kadar. So when do you think it will come up, and what do you expect, or it will be a side dish for next time, I don't know?

Paul Frazer:

My sense was that because the President had so much of this under review that it might be better to have it come up at another time when there is a greater sense of exactly what the Administration wishes to do in terms of all aspects of Guantanamo. The detainees, of course, are a critical part of that but -- Jodi, I don't know if you have a different sense of that, but my sense is that it isn't going to be top of the agenda, not because it's unimportant but because the time may not be right to have any kind of productive conversation about it. Not yet ready.

Jodi White:

Yeah, I agree with that.

David Biette:

Yes, stuff is going on here. There's a process. Do you want to end that process and I don't -- as Paul said, that's not enough to interrupt that process. It may come up and probably, say, acknowledge it, but I'm not sure it's going to be a main point of discussion.

Hugues Poulin:

[Inaudible].

Jodi White:

So he's not going to raise it, in other words.

Hugues Poulin:

Yeah.

Male Speaker:

Two really quick factual questions. How much is Canadian aid to Afghanistan, and to what extent do [unintelligible] continue to be a Canadian energy source?

Male Speaker:

Follow-up [inaudible].

Jodi White:

Yeah, I was just going to say you should talk to the Embassy to get the specifics.

Paul Frazer:

Give you the facts.

David Biette:

Yeah, I'll follow-up with those questions and I'll give you my card.

Male Speaker:

Okay. Sort of a basic historical question on these meetings. As I understand it, first off, this has been the tradition to have the president's first meeting here, except for Bush went to Mexico first. These first meetings in the past: what, if anything, has actually come out of those meetings? What's been -- has there been any actual concrete agreements or action, number one, separately, distinctly? As a different question, has there been anything that you can see come out of those meetings in a more ephemeral sense that set tones or whatnot?

David Biette:

Well, it's not quite tradition. Bush 43 went to Mexico, Clinton went to Canada, but a few months on. Bush 41 went, Reagan went, Carter and Ford never went to Canada at all. Back up, who are we -- Reagan went, Johnson went, Kennedy went, Eisenhower went later. Roosevelt went to Campobello to his cottage, not for a visit, so he did go to Canada first but not for a visit. It kind of depends when the visit comes in the term and how much you're going to devote to it. If it's going to be a two-day visit, you can get a lot more done. I think this -- we're coming -- the president hasn't even been President for a month yet, so there's not -- you can't expect a whole lot in a month than you could expect when you've had the bureaucracies working together for a six to eight months, for example, and there's a lot of issues that you need to get through. I mean, as Paul said, first, this is a get to know you, here are the issues here, where can we work together on?

Paul Frazer:

I think it's important not to overload or overburden a first meeting. This is -- I said to someone the other day, I think if the prime minister and the president could show up at the meeting with their sleeves rolled up and their ties loosened and get down to work for the five or six hours, I think they would be perfectly happy to do that. And I think they're working very hard to have that kind of atmosphere, quite frankly. This is meant to be a visit without pomp and ceremony. There will be certain honors appropriate to the visit, but the focus is truly on getting down to business because both leaders face some pretty harrowing challenges right now, and the president with but a month on the job has a lot he has on his mind in terms of the road ahead immediately, and this is a chance for him to talk with probably the closest friend and neighbor he's going to have in terms of the kinds of issues they can work on together -- must work on effectively, but work on together both here on this continent and beyond.

Male Speaker:

[Inaudible] concrete statements or in setting --

Paul Frazer:

Yeah, yeah.

Male Speaker:

[Inaudible]

Paul Frazer:

I think it's that mood. I think it's that rapport that's at -- that then allowed much more concrete work to be done, or signed off on at subsequent meetings. It's that signal, that impulse that goes

from the leadership down into the rest of government to get on with the job on A, B, C, whatever the priorities of the day happen to have been. Certainly the relationship Jodi referred to earlier in particular between Prime Minister Mulroney and President Reagan, this whole air quality agreement which was over acid rain, that was a big turn for Reagan to make at a certain point in time. NAFTA -- or not NAFTA, the Free Trade Agreement was a very big development between the two countries, huge development. So these didn't just happen overnight. They came around because both governments were focused, were well organized, and leaders wanted to move the ball forward in the relationship in a very positive way. And there were certainly bumps in the road along the way, but they were overcome. And there will be bumps in the road in this relationship, but that's the nature of relationships. But we can -- if we can't together deal with them, then I don't know any two countries that can, quite frankly.

David Biette:

Last question.

Male Speaker:

Is there a general feeling in Canada that, "Good riddance, George Bush is gone?"

Paul Frazer:

You'll have to ask the Canadians.

Male Speaker:

[Unintelligible] what do the polls show?

Paul Frazer:

They've moved on. They are now focusing on the new president.

Male Speaker:

In fact, Bush is giving his first speech in Calgary now.

Paul Frazer:

So you see, no hard feelings.

[Laughter]

Male Speaker:

It's on April 17.

Paul Frazer:

April 17.

David Biette:

Did you have another question, Ed? Okay. Well, we said we would get you out a quarter 'til. There are some refreshments if you want to have some on the way out, or if you want to speak with us individually. Jodi, did you have anything else you wanted to add to that?

Jodi White:

No.

David Biette:

Paul?

Paul Frazer:

No, thank you very much --

David Biette:

Thank you very much for coming.

Paul Frazer:

Thank you, David.

David Biette:

Thank you. Thanks, Jodi.

[End of transcript]

Presenters (Bios follow):

David Biette, director, Canada Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center

Paul Frazer, senior advisor at mCapitol Management

Jodi White, public policy scholar, Woodrow Wilson Center

Guests:

Edwin Chen, Senior White House Correspondent, Bloomberg News

Mike Dorning, Business Editor, Tribune Media Services

Alexander Duncan, Platts Inside Energy

Lee-Anne Goodman, Canadian Press

Paul Hjartarson, Canada Institute Fulbright Scholar, WWC

Paul Hunter, Ottawa Bureau Political Reporter, CBC Television

David Jackson, White House Reporter, *USA Today*

Paul Johnson, Washington Correspondent, Global TV Network of Canada

Tristan Landry, Counsellor (Public Affairs) and Spokesperson, Canadian Embassy

Evan Lehmann, Reporter, Climate Wire

Laurent Lozano, White House Correspondent, Agence France-Presse

Ewen MacAskill, Washington Correspondent, *The Guardian* (UK)

Mitch Potter, *Toronto Star*

Hugues Poulin, Correspondent, Radio-Canada TV

Julianne Prokopich, Media Relations, Canadian Embassy

Sean Sullivan, Producer, NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)

Alexey Valeryevich, Russian Embassy

Paul Workman, Washington Bureau Chief, CTV + cameraman

David N. Biette

David Biette is director of the Canada Institute, an integral program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.

Prior to joining the Wilson Center in October 2001, Biette was executive director of the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States, a national not-for-profit multidisciplinary academic professional association dedicated to the promotion of Canadian studies in the United States. From 1986 to 1992, he served as a political-economic officer at the Canadian Consulate General in New York City, where he was a policy analyst for environment, political, energy, native affairs, and transportation portfolios for the states of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and New York City.

Biette has held teaching appointments at the Johns Hopkins Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C., Blair Academy in Blairstown, New Jersey, the Université de Clermont-Ferrand in France, and Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. He has an M.A. in international relations from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, a diplôme de hautes études de lettres et civilisation from the Centre international d'études françaises, Université de Nice (France), and a B.A. from Bowdoin College.

Paul Frazer

Paul Frazer is a senior advisor at mCapitol Management. Frazer has served for several years as a government affairs consultant in Washington, D.C. advising clients in the energy, financial services, international trade issues, and cross border US-Canada issue areas.

Previously, he also served as a career diplomat with the Canadian Foreign Service in numerous positions of distinction. He served as ambassador to the Czech and Slovak Republics, at the Canadian Embassy in Warsaw, the Consulate General in New York and as minister of public affairs at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. In addition, he served as press secretary to Canada's prime minister and to the foreign minister. Frazer also previously served as assistant (international economic affairs) to the minister of finance and as executive director of Canada's economic and political assistance program for Central Europe and the former Soviet Union.

A graduate of McGill and Carleton Universities, Frazer is a fellow of Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and serves on the advisory board of the Woodrow Wilson Center's Canada Institute. He is a frequent contributor to conferences and the media on United States-Canada cross border political, economic, security, and trade questions.

Jodi White

Jodi White is currently a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington. She is the past president of the Public Policy Forum, an independent, national, not-for-profit think tank in Canada with a mandate to promote better public policy and better public management through dialogue among leaders from the public, private, labor, and voluntary sectors.

Ms. White's career combines experience in journalism, in politics and government, in the private sector, and in international affairs. She has worked at the most senior levels of government and her career has been committed to public policy and governance issues.

As a journalist, she spent six years at the CBC, first as a television news reporter and subsequently as a network radio producer, specializing in government and political affairs. Her experience in government and politics includes positions as chief of staff to the minister of

foreign affairs (1984-1988) and chief of staff to the prime minister (1993). From 1994 to 2000 Ms. White was vice-president, corporate affairs, at Imasco Ltd. a major Canadian conglomerate, in Montreal; she was also an officer of the company. Ms. White completed the ICD.D designation at the Rotman School of Business Directors' Course in 2008.