



Public Service Alliance of Canada
Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada

By e-mail – Harper.S@parl.gc.ca and by fax – 613.941.6900

August 17, 2007

Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
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Mr. Prime Minister:

On behalf of the over 160,000 members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, I am writing to express my concern regarding the Security Prosperity Partnership (SPP) agenda and its implications for the Canadian public.

PSAC members play an important role in the administration and enforcement of Canadian regulations. They are committed to ensuring that the Canadian public receives the highest levels of health, safety and security protections possible. PSAC members are committed to a democratic, just, fair and equal society for themselves, their families, their communities and all Canadians. PSAC stands in opposition to the SPP.

The SPP is proposing regulatory harmonization with the U.S. and Mexico. We know that a new regulatory framework will be discussed at Montebello this week. Unfortunately, the SPP appears to view government regulation only as an impediment for increased productivity and profits, not as an essential public policy instrument.

We are concerned that this proposed regulatory framework will weaken the health, safety and environmental regulations that PSAC members enforce. The SPP's business advisory council has recommended harmonizing lists of toxic substances and pesticide residues in spite of the fact that 40% of the pesticides regulated in Canada have stricter limits than those in the U.S. The health and safety of the Canadian public is too important to be manipulated through secret discussions.

These SPP discussions come at a time when the Canadian government is already compromising safety through its own program of deregulation. Simultaneous with the launching of the SPP, the government launched its Smart Regulation agenda which consciously facilitates increased deregulation. Canadian federal policy now requires all departments and agencies to review international practices and to limit the number of Canadian designed regulations.

Inevitably, Canada will be required to harmonize downwards to comply with an increasingly deregulated world economy. In order to maintain existing regulations, a government agency or department will have to prove that such a regulation is necessary, in effect eliminating the precautionary aspect of regulation while relying increasingly on corporate self regulation. Recent railway accidents and the importation of untested, unsafe products and materials from other countries demonstrate the fallacy of this policy.

We deplore the lack of transparency and accountability inherent in the SPP discussions. It is inappropriate that the North American Competitiveness Council (NACC) made up of the most powerful corporations in North America are being given privileged and unique access to cabinet ministers and key bureaucrats responsible for SPP negotiations while the Canadian public is left in the dark.

The NACC has drawn the blue print for an integrated North American continent which places water, agriculture, natural resources and culture all on the negotiating table. According to its own February 2007 report, the NACC boasts that *"the Council is free to recommend broader strategic steps beyond the current scope of the SPP and to begin building consensus and support for such steps in all three countries"*.

The SPP has never been brought before the legislatures of North America for full debate, discussion and review. Worse still, it appears that Parliament is not involved in the SPP process by design. Instead, the Security and Prosperity Partnership is designed to harmonize regulations and protect corporate investment without changing a single law. This makes it easy to circumvent Parliament and avoid public scrutiny. SPP discussions are secret and the government consistently blocks efforts of concerned Canadians to find out more about the ways that it will compromise their health, safety and security.

The SPP extends the security perimeter around the United States turning Mexico and Canada into buffer states. This poses a direct threat to the human rights of people living in Canada. The Maher Arar case and the work impediments faced by Bell Helicopter workers born in countries deemed 'enemies' by the United States bear witness to the abuses that have already taken place.

Under the SPP, these abuses will only multiply. The U.S. systematically violates the Geneva Conventions on torture and rendition. The Arar Inquiry determined that the RCMP was complicit with the U.S. in the rendition and torture of Canadian citizens.

The privacy of Canadians is also compromised. Earlier this summer, Canada's no-fly list came into effect as part of the security measures negotiated under the SPP. The no-fly list opens the door for racial profiling, false detainment and inaccurate blacklisting of innocent people. The real possibility that the Canadian list will be merged with the U.S. no-fly list will create even more human rights violations.

Finally, the SPP severely limits and undermines Canada's sovereignty. It does this through regulatory harmonization which severely limits our ability to use regulations to forward public policy goals and protections that Canadians demand.

If plans proceed the way unelected corporate advisors are recommending, the SPP further undermines our sovereignty by allowing the U.S. unlimited access to Canadian natural resources such as oil, natural gas, hydro and water. It is not in Canada's national interest, environmentally or strategically, to continue the accelerated production of western oil and increased continental pipeline expansion at bargain basement prices while other parts of Canada still have to import their oil.

The SPP goes well beyond NAFTA. Unlike the views expressed by your government, we believe that NAFTA is a failure for the majority of Canadians and not a success. SPP agreements do nothing to help the peoples of North America. They do nothing to reverse the growing poverty gap and inequalities in all three North American countries. They do, however, provide significant opportunities for the private sector to decide national priorities and design policies that benefit their bottom line.

PSAC believes that there are far more viable alternatives to promoting the health, safety and security of the Canadian people. Everyday we hear from our members who are the face-to-face service providers for the Canadian government about ways to improve the welfare of all Canadians. Canadians expect and deserve to make their own decisions about their health, safety and security. Your government has no right to cede that responsibility to your American counterpart.

Instead of concentrating on the SPP and harmonizing Canadian policies with American policies, which even the majority of Americans don't agree with, PSAC believes that the Canadian government should develop its own national policies in consultation with Parliament and all aspects of Canadian society, not just the corporate sector.

A new national policy should concentrate on fair trade instead of what is euphemistically called free trade, real environmental sustainability instead of the aggressive despoliation of Canada's natural resources, an industrial policy that benefits all sectors of the economy and all regions of the country, and last but certainly not least, strong quality public services that facilitate all of the above and ensures the health, safety, equality and security of all Canadians.

As a first step, the PSAC strongly recommends that you remove Canada immediately from the Security and Prosperity Partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Gordon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "G".

John Gordon
National President
Public Services Alliance of Canada

c.c. The Honourable David Emerson, Minister of International Trade