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## NAFTA, Free Trade, Stimulus Money, Canadian Industry

# 'Buy America', bumper-sticker of the day, killing Canadian business

By [Judi McLeod](#) [Monday, May 4, 2009](#)

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It's got to be a standout irony in the longstanding US-Canadian relationship that while some 70% of Canadians would have voted for Barack Obama if they could that Canada has been completely shut out of the American market by Obama's stimulus bill.



While America retains full access to procurement in Canada, it is the opposite for America's "best friend and trading partner".

Given conquering king treatment when he made his northern neighbour his first official visit as U.S. president last February, Obama promises that Canada would be safe from U.S. protectionism warmed the frigid weather that day.

Behind all the pomp and ceremony in Ottawa, there was nothing to worry about.

After all in his campaign protectionist speech in Ohio, Obama told everybody concerned that it was "just campaign rhetoric" regarding protectionist threats on steel, telling us don't worry, Canada, "I will honor free trade."

Noting that his own half sister and her husband had lived in the Land of the Maple Leaf, "Who Loves You?" seemed to be the theme of the new president's Ottawa address.

Reality moved in within days of Obama's Canadian tour and soon became lost behind news headlines of the recession, the ongoing bankruptcy of corporate America and the threat of H1N1 Virus. Behind the scenes Canada and the United States are now involved in what can only be described as an all-out trade war.

Canada, America's biggest trading partner, believed the President's promises that there was nothing to worry about, that the United States would stand by its international trade obligations and resist protectionism.

That was the story carried by the mainstream media for weeks after the official visit to the north.

For countless Canadian companies who have been competing in the U.S. for decades, life was never to return to normal trading with America. They were told overnight that it was over--they cannot sell to the U.S.

In Ottawa, Obama re-assured Canadians that his stimulus package would be subject to NAFTA and World Trade Organization rules, which specifically bar discriminatory practices. But a Buy America provision is squeezing out Canadian bids on projects at the state and municipal level.

New legislation scheduled for debate in the U.S. Senate this week, governs the billions of dollars to be spent by municipalities in the U.S. on drinking water improvements.

While "Buy American" has become the bumper-sticker of the times, Americans retain unfettered access to Canadian procurement.

Canadian companies, already fighting to protect jobs in a deepening recession, are fighting back.

Stockwell Day, the International Trade Minister was in Washington last week, where he told the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that the rising tide of protectionism in the U.S. risks provoking retaliatory measures in Canada.

"It is a textbook case of how when doors begin to close, and when trade barriers go up, economies go down," he said.

Meanwhile, Obama apologizing to the world for America, is making enemies in the country next door.

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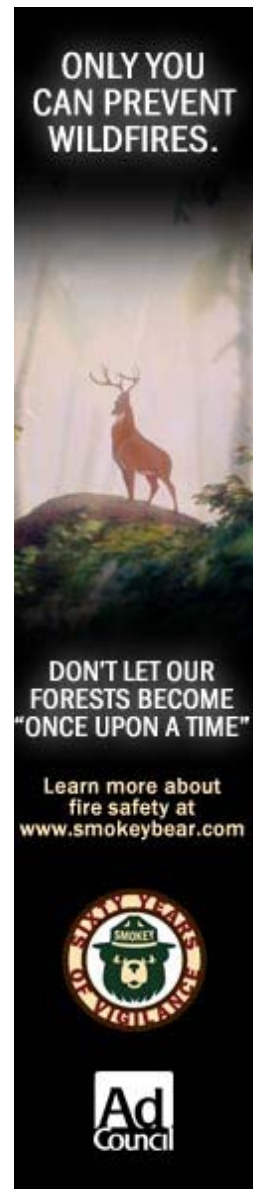
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