



A new era

Of all the files on any prime minister's desk, none is more important than Canada-US relations, on the economy, trade, the environment, energy, defence and global security. And the management of the relationship starts at the top, between prime minister and president. Their interpersonal relations send unmistakable signals on tone and priorities to their entire governments in Ottawa and Washington.

The arrival of Barack Obama in the White House obviously has given Canada an opportunity to reset the clock in the relationship, and his whirlwind working visit to Ottawa on February 19 was the point of departure. For us at this magazine, it is the first opportunity for a major thematic on Canada-US relations since our issue of February 2003. The world was very different then — George W. Bush, in his first term as president, had yet to visit to Canada, and his coalition of the willing had yet to invade Iraq. When Canada declined to participate in the Iraqi operation, Bush cancelled a scheduled trip to Ottawa and didn't visit Canada and a new prime minister, Paul Martin, until after elections in both countries in 2004.

By contrast, Ottawa was the first foreign capital Obama visited and, true to the asymmetric nature of the relationship, the visit caused a lot more excitement in Canada than it did in the United States. But as John Manley notes in our lead article, for the first time in eight years, a Canadian prime minister doesn't risk losing political capital by being seen with an American president. Especially Stephen Harper, as a Conservative prime minister, who has been called everything from Dubya's clone to his soul mate. Manley, a former foreign affairs and finance minister, sees opportunities, but also challenges, particularly on trade files driven by Congressional interests in Washington.

Derek Burney, our former ambassador in Washington, knows all about that. "The key question that now confronts Canada's government," he writes, "is this: what does Canada want out of the Canada-US relationship?" Jeremy Kinsman, another experienced Foreign Affairs hand, looks at the prospects for harmonious relations in what Ronald Reagan used to call the North American "family." In Obama, he writes, Canadians see a US president with a view

Une nouvelle ère

Des innombrables dossiers qui occupent tout premier ministre canadien, aucun n'est plus important que celui des relations canado-américaines pour l'économie, le commerce, l'environnement, l'énergie, la défense et la sécurité internationale. Or, la gestion de ces relations commence au plus haut sommet, entre les chefs d'État des deux pays. Et inévitablement, les liens personnels qui les unissent donnent le ton et déterminent les priorités de chacun des gouvernements.

À l'évidence, l'arrivée de Barack Obama à la Maison-Blanche offre au Canada l'occasion de remettre les pendules à l'heure, et la brève visite que le président américain a effectuée à Ottawa le 19 février dernier pourrait marquer le coup d'envoi de cet exercice. Elle offre aussi à *Options politiques* la première occasion depuis février 2003 de consacrer un important dossier aux relations canado-américaines. C'était il y a six ans, et le monde était alors très différent de ce qu'il est aujourd'hui : George W. Bush en était à son premier mandat, il n'avait toujours pas rendu visite au Canada, et sa *Coalition of the Willing* n'avait pas encore envahi l'Irak. Quand Ottawa a décliné son invitation de participer à l'opération irakienne, Bush a annulé un voyage à Ottawa pourtant planifié et reporté sa visite à 2004, après l'élection de Paul Martin et sa propre réélection.

À l'inverse, c'est Ottawa qu'a choisi le président Obama pour sa première visite à l'étranger. Et elle a suscité chez nous nettement plus d'enthousiasme qu'aux États-Unis, vu la nature asymétrique des liens entre nos deux pays. Pour la première fois en huit ans, observe l'ancien ministre des Finances et des Affaires étrangères John Manley, un premier ministre canadien ne s'est pas déprécié politiquement en s'affichant avec un président américain. Ce qu'a sans doute goûté Stephen Harper, souvent qualifié de clone ou d'émule de Georges W., entre autres aménités. Cette nouvelle situation est riche de possibilités, croit John Manley, mais elle soulève également d'importants défis, notamment dans les dossiers commerciaux devant le Congrès américain. Ancien ambassadeur à Washington, Derek Burney connaît tout aussi bien le sujet. Et il juge que « le Canada doit aujourd'hui répondre à la question clé des attentes qu'il entretient à l'égard des relations canado-américaines ». Jeremy

of the world that is not unlike their own, inclined to multilateralism and consulting allies, a refreshing change from the exceptionalism of the Bush years.

From Brigham Young University in Utah, one of America's wisest Canada's watchers, Earl Fry, considers Canada's economic relationship in light of the global recession, and voices concerns about protectionism rearing its head. Still, he notes a recent Gallup poll in which 90 percent of Americans consider Canada to be their country's best friend. Even so, Robin Sears writes that with the US taking 80 percent of Canada's exports, much is to be gained by a public relations offensive of building the Canadian brand in the US.

From Washington, David Jones writes that Obama's visit was "just the beginning of the beginning," but adds the new Obama administration provides an opportunity for "a new normal" between the two countries. And Colin Robertson, former head of advocacy and outreach at our Washington embassy, writes of "a smart partnership," and the possibilities for building on the momentum of the Obama visit. On the environmental file, Gordon McBean writes that Obama and Harper aren't exactly on the same page in their approach to climate change, and thinks the President has a better idea, with a cap-and-trade system for reducing GHG emissions, while the PM is focused on clean energy technologies.

And finally, pollster Nik Nanos of Nanos Research was in the field again for *Policy Options*, exactly four weeks after the Obama visit, to measure the state of Canadian public opinion on Canada-US relations. Our exclusive Nanos poll ends the Canada-US thematic, which begins with an unusual *Verbatim*, the Harper-Obama news conference at the conclusion of the visit. Our cover package is enriched by photos, including our cover shot, by Jason Ransom, who was up close and personal on the visit.

At the back of the book, in our occasional department *The North*, we offer three timely articles. Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon writes of the challenges of mapping Canada's Arctic continental shelf, and observes that it's not for the faint-hearted. Terry Fenge and Tony Penikett write of the Arctic vacuum in Canada's foreign policy, and Jessica Shadian notes that Canada is one of eight circumpolar nations and our approach to the Arctic should reflect that.

Finally, we welcome two more authors to our growing *Policy Options* team of Contributing Writers, Derek Burney and Pierre Martin. Both are leading authorities on Canada-US relations. Derek has unique experience in both government and business, and looks out at these issues from Ottawa. Pierre, who studied at Northwestern University in Chicago, has returned to Université de Montréal from a semester at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington. As it happens, Antonia Maioni, mother of their triplet sons, also graces our masthead. She is the director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, and brings special insights on health care and Quebec politics.

Kinsman évalue pour sa part les possibilités d'une harmonisation des relations au sein de ce que Ronald Reagan qualifiait de « famille nord-américaine ». Les Canadiens voient en Barack Obama, enclin au multilatéralisme et à la consultation de ses alliés un président aux valeurs proches des leurs, note-t-il. Un changement bienvenu par rapport à l'unilatéralisme des années Bush.

Observateur avisé de la vie politique canadienne, Earl Fry, de la Brigham Young University en Utah, analyse nos liens économiques avec les États-Unis à la lumière de la récession mondiale et s'inquiète d'une résurgence du protectionnisme. Il se dit tout de même rassuré des conclusions d'un récent sondage Gallup, selon lequel 90 p. 100 des Américains considèrent le Canada comme leur meilleur ami. Malgré tout, le Canada gagnerait à lancer une offensive de marketing pour renforcer son image de marque auprès de ce grand ami, selon Robin Sears.

De Washington, David Jones écrit que la visite du président Obama n'a marqué que « le début d'un commencement », mais ajoute que sa nouvelle administration pourrait signifier un « retour à la normale » entre nos deux pays. Quant à Colin Robertson, ancien chef de la représentation à notre ambassade de Washington, il propose de miser sur la dynamique créée par cette visite pour nouer un « partenariat intelligent ». Dans le dossier de l'environnement, Gordon McBean rappelle tout ce qui sépare Stephen Harper de Barack Obama et soutient que le président a été mieux inspiré en préconisant un système de plafond et d'échange pour réduire les émissions de GES, alors que notre premier ministre maintient l'accent sur les technologies d'énergie propre.

Enfin, notre spécialiste des sondages Nik Nanos a interrogé nos compatriotes sur les relations canado-américaines exactement un mois après la visite du président. Ce sondage exclusif conclut notre thème mensuel, qui s'ouvre sur une inhabituelle rubrique *Verbatim*, à savoir la conférence de presse donnée par les deux chefs d'État, Harper et Obama, qui ont tous deux affiché une impressionnante maîtrise de leurs dossiers.

Nous vous proposons par ailleurs un dossier sur le Nord. Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon s'intéresse d'abord aux difficultés soulevées par la cartographie du plateau continental de l'Arctique canadien, une tâche qui exige selon elle un courage certain. Terry Fenge et Tony Penikett font valoir que l'Arctique devrait être au cœur de notre politique étrangère. Et Jessica Shadian rappelle que le Canada compte parmi les huit nations circumpolaires et que son approche de l'Arctique doit mieux en tenir compte.

Signalons enfin que Derek Burney et Pierre Martin, tous deux experts en relations canado-américaines, se joignent avec ce numéro à notre équipe de collaborateurs spécialisés. Le premier possède une riche expérience du secteur public et privé et analyse la question depuis Ottawa. Le second, qui a étudié à l'Université Northwestern, a dernièrement réintégré l'Université de Montréal après un semestre au Wilson Center de Washington.

possibilities

Q&A: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO INTEROPERABILITY

The complex task of getting people, systems and IT to work together seamlessly in mixed IT environments is an important priority, and challenge, for Canadian governments and for governments around the world.

Possibilities, a Microsoft Canada publication dedicated to celebrating innovative achievements and fostering thought-leading discussions with the public sector, sat down with Theresa Pardo and Brian Burke from the Center for Technology in Government at the University at Albany, SUNY, to discuss their most recent research on interoperability in government.

Q: What is interoperability?

Theresa Pardo: Interoperability is often associated with technology, but it's also about management and public policy. We know, for example, that the technology that enables the sharing of individual health records already exists. But from a regulatory or legislative perspective, the freedom to actually share that data is still limited. So if a government wants to pursue electronic health records or any other initiative that requires interoperability, it must first have the appropriate policies in place.

Q: In your most recent research, you refer to interoperability as an "intense struggle." Why is it so difficult for governments to achieve?

TP: There are several reasons. The first is resource allocation. Agencies or systems can't connect to each other if there is no money in their budgets to support a broader interoperability agenda, and government budgets don't necessarily account for the co-mingling of spending and priorities. Generally speaking, there are no resource allocation models in place that actually support the kind of tasks that have to be carried out to create truly interoperable policies, practices and technologies.

Brian Burke: Another hurdle is getting leaders, whether in government or the private sector, to understand that the work that they do plays a critical role in making interoperability possible. Too often they'll say "the IT shop can't seem to get this major business process implemented across six agencies" when it's not an IT problem to begin with. It comes down to the people: the front-line managers, policy makers or agency executives. Finally, interoperability can be difficult to measure in traditional terms. Interoperability "wins" are not the kind of initiatives that traditionally get talked about in a press release. I think this is another challenge.

Q: What's at stake? Why is it important to get interoperability right?

TP: Interoperability leads to a government worth having, a government that operates at a new level and demonstrates very visible benefits to its citizens. This is an important factor, as people increasingly expect the government to offer immediate and seamless services, similar to Amazon.com or eBay. We're already seeing results: look at New York, for example, where a business can apply in one place for all the permits they require from various labour and liquor boards. That's an example of something that has a tangible benefit for citizens.



Interoperability also touches things the citizen doesn't see directly, such as improving emergency response or public safety capabilities, or giving governments the ability to track vendors in a more informed way and ensure that the contracting practice is transparent. These are the kinds of initiatives that increase the value of government in the lives of citizens.

Q: Can you point to some success stories?

TP: The criminal justice system is a great example, where the ability to share information across multiple criminal justice organizations and, therefore, improve public safety is quite evident. You see it as well in public health, in responding to disease outbreaks like the West Nile virus.

Q: Are there any in Canada?

BB: Service New Brunswick, a one-stop portal for citizens who need information or a service from the provincial government, is a successful example of providing citizens with services they need, and it has everything to do with interoperability. New Brunswick has done customer satisfaction surveys and found that citizens are very satisfied with their government. That is a direct result of interoperability.

Q: How do government executives go about solving the interoperability challenge to create more of these successes?

BB: As we said earlier, you can get there when an executive recognizes the need to create a truly interoperable government. During the initiative to combat the West Nile virus, for example, the commissioner of Public Health who led the project basically said to all of the state agencies, "You will work together to make this happen." It was amazing what happened as a consequence of that statement, and it's a great example of the kind of executive leadership that made it possible for agencies and local governments to come together in a new way and create a capability that didn't exist before.

For additional information about interoperability, visit www.microsoft.ca/interop

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