



EBTC INFORMATION BULLETIN

DATE: March 25, 2008

SUBJECT: Border bottlenecks

SOURCE: Truck News

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A new report released yesterday says relieving bottlenecks at the US/Canada border should be made a priority during the US presidential election.

The report, published by several groups including think tank the Brookings Institution, said Canada and the US must work together to develop a "border of the future" which would take advantage of new technology to assist with the smooth flow of people and goods across the border. The report also calls on both countries to improve border infrastructure such as bridges, rail lines and ports.

John Austin, director of the Brookings' Great Lakes Economic Initiative, said legislators must think of the region that includes upstate New York through to Minnesota as well as the southern portions of Ontario and Quebec as a single region linked by the Great Lakes.

"We're not islands; we're mutually dependent," Austin was quoted as saying by Associated Press over the weekend. "We need an attitude adjustment. We have powerful attributes that we can build on and benefit from, if we have effective leadership."

However, he added growth in this key area must be a federal priority.

"There's an obsession with China around the globe," Austin said. "We do more trade with Canada in one day than we do over weeks and months with China."

The report points out that trade across the Ambassador Bridge in a single day matches the annual total of US exports to Japan.

The report criticizes increased security initiatives for shippers, including advanced notice requirements for cross-border shipments.

"What really alarms us is the speed at which these new requirements are being put on border crossings," said Sarah Hubbard, vice-president of government relations with the Detroit Regional Chamber. "We depend on a free flow of traffic with Canada."

The report says both countries should have a strategy in place by 2015 to reduce congestion and red tape at the border.