

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
THIRTEENTH REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE
TOWARDS A SECURE AND TRADE-EFFICIENT BORDER**

Introduction

The Government of Canada recognized the issues raised by the Report and responded vigorously to address them. The Report's recommendations either have been or are being addressed by Budget 2001 or the Smart Border Declaration. The Government of Canada is in agreement with the central theme of the report, that is the critical importance to Canada of maintaining a secure and trade efficient border with the U.S.

The attacks of September 11 brought the economic interdependence of our two countries into sharp focus. The need for increased security without disruption of legitimate trade and travel was underlined most dramatically by the long lines that resulted from the heightened state of alert at all border crossings. The Government of Canada moved quickly to address this new urgency by rapidly engaging the U.S. Government, and in particular the new Director of Homeland Security Tom Ridge.

On December 12, 2001, then-Minister of Foreign Affairs John Manley and Director Ridge signed the Smart Border Declaration. The objective of the Canadian Government in signing this declaration was to ensure that the U.S. preoccupation with border security took into account the need to ensure the economic security of both countries by keeping the border open and trade flowing efficiently. The Declaration includes a thirty point Action Plan for Creating a Secure and Smart Border which was agreed upon bilaterally with the Americans. The thirty points are being negotiated by different government departments and agencies on both sides of the border. A report of progress on all thirty points will be presented to Prime Minister Chrétien and President Bush prior to the G8 Summit meeting in Kanasaskis in June.

Within the Action Plan, both countries agreed to four priorities: the secure flow of people, the secure flow of goods, the security of infrastructure, and coordination and information sharing in the enforcement of these objectives. The Action Plan is intended to address both the problems of border management which became apparent after September 11, and those which had already been identified prior to the terrorist attacks in the U.S.

Even before September 11 there was a need to improve upon the existing border management model in order to provide secure, efficient movements of legitimate goods and travellers across the border. The Government of Canada was aware of this need, and had been working internally, and bilaterally with the U.S. to address these concerns for several years prior to September 11, 2001. The goal of both Governments is not to return the border to its pre-September 11 state, but rather to move it forward into a new generation of border management policies and processes.