

CUSP Dialogue on the Border

Both sets of CUSP meetings met with an enthusiastic response from local participants. The meetings were unprecedented for the Canada-U.S. border in terms of the number and variety of senior leaders from the public and private sector who participated and the integrated approach taken to border issues.

The most common theme voiced by local leaders at the Vancouver and Niagara-on-the-Lake meetings was a desire for a more **open border**. Easier passage for individuals and cargo was the stakeholders' primary concern, and they pressed Canadian and U.S. government participants on changing the status quo. A few local participants questioned the need for any border at all, arguing that given the closeness of the relationship, our countries should be able to accept people or goods from each other without inspections. Other local participants and federal government representatives countered that for reasons of sovereignty and differing laws, Canadian and U.S. inspectors and law enforcement personnel had to remain on the border. Still, many private and public sector leaders voiced support for a **perimeter approach** to the border, whereby Canada and the United States would concentrate more on stopping criminals and illegal shipments from third countries entering either country and thus be able to make the "internal" Canada-U.S. border more open.

Some local CUSP participants cited Western Europe as a model to be emulated, including the European Union's customs union and Schengen regime (whereby members have eliminated border controls on people travelling between participating states). These stakeholders felt that given our close relations, crossing the Canada-U.S. border should be no more difficult than crossing EU border, but argued that, in fact, it is.