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Chapter 2
Current Issues

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Canada-U.S. Border

Canada and the U.S. enjoy a long history of border relations based on principles of risk management, cooperation, consultation, effectiveness and efficiency. The Government of Canada has successfully formalized several programs to identify low-risk travellers and goods and to expedite their passage across the border.

The Government of Canada has also committed $75 million to be spent over the next two years on ensuring that the Canada Border Services Agency has the resources it needs to deliver efficient and secure border services at more than 1,200 domestic and international locations. These funds are being used to increase the number of on-site border services officers at key border installations and to meet evolving operational demands resulting from increased trade and travel.

An additional two-year, $165-million spending package includes $26 million to introduce microchip biometric data into Canada's passport ("e-passport"). This spending package also includes $14 million for the NEXUS program for low-risk frequent travellers, which aims at increasing the program's subscription rate from 130,000 to 350,000 and further alleviating pressure at land border crossings.

The Government of Canada continues to work closely with partners to advance border solutions through interdepartmental North American trilateral and bilateral working groups; close monitoring of the work of the North American Competitiveness Council; and an assessment of the Canada-U.S. Border Wait-Time Management Project. For example, Canadian senior officials are engaging key U.S. counterparts through the Canada-U.S. Border Facilitation Working Group. This important bilateral initiative is helping to identify solutions to specific border issues, and to showcase the strong and ongoing Canada-U.S. cooperation in managing our common border.

Despite the progress of cooperative efforts, Canada continues to face challenges flowing from some unilateral U.S. security initiatives aimed at securing the northern border. For example, in 2009, a key border issue will be the continuing preparation for the implementation of the U.S. Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) at the land and sea borders on June 1, 2009. Under WHTI, a passport or alternative WHTI-compliant document such as an enhanced driver's licence (EDL) will be required to enter the U.S. To help address this issue, the Government's 2008 Budget allocated $6 million for federal activities aimed at developing provincial EDLs. Several provincial EDL programs have already been introduced, and more are planned for the coming year. In addition, the Government of Canada will continue to promote uptake of these documents to ensure that the transition to full implementation of WHTI is as seamless as possible.

The implementation of WHTI and other U.S. security measures—such as the collection of agricultural inspection fees, increased inspections as part of risk-management programs, and increased security resources and surveillance will result in significant compliance costs for our