



2001 SUMMIT

A JOINT NEWSLETTER ON THE QUEBEC CITY HEMISPHERIC SUMMIT • No. 6 • MARCH 2001

Canada's Summit: The Americas at a Crossroads

With only days to go before the third Summit of the Americas in Canada, tensions and stakes are rising. The atmospherics are being set with threats of street clashes between protesters and security forces outside the meeting, and serious divergences are emerging amongst countries about the pace and priorities for hemispheric integration. Expectations and realities may not be in sync; misinformation abounds. In this our last newsletter before the meeting in Quebec City, we set the context for the Canadian Summit.

Skeptics and opponents point to several obstacles facing leaders as they enter the Quebec City citadel. The media and anti-trade protesters insist that this is the "free trade Summit," ignoring the many other action items on the agenda designed to strengthen the collective social and democratic fabric of the countries of the region. While polls in Canada indicate support for free trade, political commentary reflects general discontent with the globalization process. A domestic jurisdictional debate has arisen in Canada between the federal government and the Quebec provincial leadership about the role of the premier of Quebec at the Summit. Deep concerns have been raised about the lack of transparency and access for non-governmental experts and civil society groups to the actual site of the Summit meeting. Many observers worry that the most recent tensions generated in

the Canada-Brazil bilateral relationship might impede a consensus inside the meeting, particularly given Brazil's lukewarm interest in the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

Outside Canada, the United States, by far the largest export market for the countries of the Americas, is entering an economic slowdown. Once again, a US president is likely to arrive at the Summit without the fast track trade promotion authority that would send a clear signal of US commitment to free trade, even though his administration is pledged to support free trade in the Americas. Other commentators worry that the Summit may not develop a regional strategy to address the clear and present danger posed by the deterioration of the peace process in Colombia. Argentina is focused on rebuilding its economy, and Peru is only now reconstructing its ravaged democracy. Haiti's new president will be under pressure to commit to basic standards of democracy and governance in order to secure economic support for Haiti's much-needed reforms.

Skeptics will point to the limits of summitry, suggesting that the Summit's success stories are nothing more than process with little impact. The new anti-drug initiative (the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism) is likely to be dismissed as having "no teeth." Concerns will be raised that policy issues that affect people's daily lives,

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www.focal.ca

What's on in Quebec?

The April 20-22 Summit of the Americas represents a unique opportunity for event organizers. Thousands of individuals with interest in hemispheric issues will converge in the province of Quebec in the days prior to the official meeting of heads of state. The following are some of the events scheduled to take place:

La Conférence de Montréal: Free Trade in the Americas, Challenges and Perspectives

Montreal, April 17-20, 2001

www.conferenceofmontreal.com

Every spring, La Conférence de Montréal brings together heads of state, government ministers, representatives of international organizations and government agencies, directors of major international and national organizations, senior business executives and leading experts from all over the world to discuss topics related to the economy of the new century. This seventh conference will focus on the economic integration of the Americas.

Hemispheric Trade and Sustainability Symposium

Quebec City, April 17-18, 2001

<http://sdgateway.net/events/default.asp?EventID=940>

This event, co-sponsored by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Canada, will bring together 50 specialists and 150 civil society leaders, academics, policymakers and industry leaders from the Americas in a forum for dialogue on sustainable development and hemispheric integration.

Conference on Inter-American Cooperation Beyond Free Trade

Quebec City, April 17-20, 2001

www.ulaval.ca/iqhei/sommet2001.html

Organized by the Institut Québécois pour les Hautes Études Internationales (IQHEI), this conference's goal is to increase understanding of Pan-American cooperation. It will emphasize the broad range of inter-American cooperation in such fields as the environment and hemispheric security, with a special focus on the social agenda behind the Summit process and FTAA negotiations. Participants will include specialists from throughout the Americas, among them prestigious academics from Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Mexico, the United States and Canada.

Second Peoples' Summit of the Americas

Quebec City, April 17-21, 2001

www.peoplessummit.org

Also known as the Parallel Summit, this event is being organized by Réseau Québécois sur l'Intégration Continentale (RQIC) and Common Frontiers as an initiative of the Hemispheric Social Alliance. The event will provide a forum for a wide range of organizations to discuss key issues and advance the construction of alternative hemispheric integration proposals in many different areas, including human rights, labor rights, social rights, the rights of women, environmental protection and education.

José Zaragoza
Policy Analyst, FOCAL

Canada's Summit: The Americas

such as education and health care, remain primarily within the jurisdiction of national governments, and that Canada's connectivity strategy alone cannot solve deep social inequities. Many will question whether the Summit can generate the political will to find collective solutions to the region's vast challenges of poverty and inequity.

A more optimistic outlook, however, stresses the power and potential of summitry. Beyond the process issues, such as institutionalizing the Summit, strengthening the Organization of American States into a real Summit secretariat, or encouraging more civil society participation at these meetings, many experts point to the important opportunity to build personal relationships between leaders. The increasing sectoral dialogues led by ministers of each government (justice, environment, trade, labor), as well as emerging cooperation between parliamentarians and mayors are indications that a community of the Americas is achievable. These dialogues are key elements for consensus-building in the hemisphere. The Summit declaration and Plan of Action can also send strong signals to national bureaucracies to overcome inertia and improve governance at the national level.

Supporters of summitry have high expectations that Canada will leave a mark on the hemispheric Summit cycle, enshrining clear language in support of a collective defense of representative democracy, fostering strategies for inclusion of all sectors of society in public policymaking, and setting new and higher standards for measuring progress in areas such as anti-drug strategies, corruption and environmental management. Further, there are hopes that Canada can broker con-

The Non-Governmental Voices

In the months and weeks leading up to the Quebec City Summit of the Americas, non-governmental initiatives and positions relating to the Summit have proliferated. Several hundred organizations from throughout the hemisphere participated in the consultation process organized by Corporación Participa from Chile and a number of governments have held officially mandated consultation exercises of their own. The Hemispheric Social Alliance is organizing a parallel People's Summit in the days prior to the official meeting that will provide a forum for labor, environment, and human rights organizations to express their concerns about the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Other groups are mobilizing for the Quebec City Summit, where they will voice their opinions through street demonstrations. It is these groups that have attracted the

most media attention as the April 20-22 meeting approaches.

The groups preparing to demonstrate in Quebec City are a diverse set of actors with differing agendas. Nevertheless, most of them would agree on the following:

1. "Globalization" or "global capitalism" threatens to substitute corporate rule for democracy. In this context Quebec City is merely one stop on a long road of demonstrations, the most famous being those at the World Trade Organization talks in Seattle in November 1999.
2. The lack of transparency in trade negotiations and the overall Summit of the Americas process is a major problem. The FTAA continues to be negotiated outside public debates and parliamentary discussion.

3. Trade liberalization is not distributing wealth to developing countries, at least not so far; rather, it is widening the gap between rich and poor.

4. Trade liberalization threatens to infringe on human rights in the hemisphere, particularly the rights of women, children and ethnic minorities.

5. The proposed FTAA threatens to damage the environment and infringe on labor rights in the hemisphere. More specifically, the trade agreement would take further steps toward subjecting health, education, community development, environmental and labor issues to the logic of the free market and corporate control, while marginalizing and reducing national regulations and controls. This aspect is particularly important to Canadian protesters, who contend that the Summit and the FTAA are a threat to Canada's sovereignty.

Many of these issues are legitimate, and some will be discussed simultaneously by the delegates involved in the Quebec City Summit. Clearly, bridging the division between the parties would require additional steps to make the Summit of the Americas process more transparent and open to the public. More dialogue and interaction would be beneficial to all. It is unfortunate that a minority of actors seem more interested in "shutting down the Summit" than in engaging constructively on issues that are central to the people of the hemisphere.

For further information see:

- Corporación Participa's consultation process, www.sociedadcivil.org
- The parallel People's Summit www.asc-hsa.org/quebec.html
www.web.net/comfront/
www.alternatives.ca/rqic/
- Planned demonstrations against the Summit, <http://wtoaction.org/ftaa.phtml>

Stacey Wilson-Forsberg
Policy Analyst, FOCAL

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sensus on tough trade issues, primarily by consolidating the political will to keep the FTAA negotiations on track for 2005 and addressing the labor, environmental and social concerns which have been raised by so many groups throughout the Americas. Finally, a significant Canadian contribution to summitry would be to secure a firm commitment from international financial institutions to fund Summit mandates. Such initiatives could contribute to improved governance and development in the Americas—never the stuff of front page headlines, but nonetheless important for our populations.

These are the crossroads at Quebec City. A failure to forge ahead on critical issues needed for further progress and modernization in the Americas will not be in the interest even of the dissenting voices outside the Summit meeting. The momentum built since the Miami and Santiago Summits must be sustained. Non-governmental groups can play their part in ensuring that Canada's Summit improves inter-American cooperation by monitoring, following and evaluating Summit initiatives—with or without government support. The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) and the Summit of the Americas Center (SOAC) of Florida International University remain committed to supporting this collective vision and the complex task ahead.

Nobina Robinson
Executive Director
FOCAL

New Leaders, Tougher Issues in Quebec

Quebec City will be the first Summit of the Americas experience for more than half of the hemisphere's leaders. Of the class that entered since 1998, some are new to their posts and others well into their terms, but a weightier load of regional political tensions awaits them at the 2001 Summit than faced their predecessors in Santiago and Miami. While some leaders may be tempted to play more to the protesters outside the meetings than to their colleagues, the expected tumult in the streets may well be reflected inside in testy exchanges among some of the newer faces on the hemispheric block.

The US and Chilean desire for a ringing endorsement of an accelerated Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) process looks to be the main substantive focus of the Summit. Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso will be working hard to keep his MERCOSUR co-members and associates in line with his vision of a Brazilian-led South American Free Trade Area (SAFTA). Chile's Ricardo Lagos is looking north instead, already pressing for an early deal with US President George W. Bush to solidify Chile's goal of a "NAFTA-plus" free trade agreement with the region's major market. Argentina's Fernando de la Rúa is likely to arrive with little maneuvering room, his economy in tatters, his government weakened, and resurgent protectionist sentiments limiting Argentina's ability to press ahead wholeheartedly with its MERCOSUR obligations, much less push for the FTAA.

Mexico's Vicente Fox can claim barely one month more in office than Bush, but the two have already met to discuss Fox's ideas for broadening NAFTA to permit more Mexicans to work legally in the US. Under the previous PRI administration, Mexico moved decisively to assert itself with FTAs in Central America. The last Mexican government also opposed the recent US legislation granting NAFTA

parity to Caribbean Basin nations, and it is still not clear that the Fox regime will change Mexico's largely lip-service support for the FTAA. Bush himself will arrive at the Summit without the fast track clout—now dubbed "trade promotion authority," or TPA—that he has said he will seek to move the negotiations ahead.

Spiking petroleum prices have engaged all 34 leaders, and OPEC's new point man, Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, seems to be the leading candidate for a maverick role in Quebec City. The coup-leader-turned-democratically-elected-president's radical rhetoric and provocative populism, not to mention his public embrace of Fidel Castro, have not endeared him to the US, whose official criticism thus far has been curiously muted. Chávez has also meddled in the Colombian armed conflict, recently declaring his country "neutral" in that tragic morass.

Embattled Colombian President Andrés Pastrana's discomfort with his next-door neighbor is yet another friction below the surface of the Quebec City deliberations. After Pastrana's recent Washington meetings with Bush and US Congressional leaders, he is likely once again to seek hemispheric support for his Plan Colombia. He has not done well in other venues, but perhaps with Bush present a strong statement may emerge in connection with the push to require that all FTAA members be democracies.

Many more of the hemisphere's leaders have serious doubts and face hard domestic sells of an early FTAA conclusion. Despite Canada's strong diplomatic push, the accumulated tensions will play out in Quebec City. The Summit will be a fascinating media event, but growing regional divisions may thwart forward progress on the real issues.

Carl Ciria
Director, Summit of the Americas Center
Florida International University

Upcoming Events

April 1-6, 2001

Model OAS, Buenos Aires, Argentina

April 3-4, 2001

Meeting of Finance Ministers of the Hemisphere, Toronto, Canada

April 5-6, 2001

6th Americas Business Forum
Buenos Aires, Argentina

April 7, 2001

Meeting of Trade Ministers of the Hemisphere, Buenos Aires, Argentina

April 16-17, 2001

XXIII Meeting of the Summit
Implementation Review Group (SIRG)
Quebec City, Canada

April 17-19, 2001

IQHEI Colloquium on International
Cooperation Beyond Free Trade
Quebec City, Canada

April 17-20, 2001

People's Summit, Quebec City, Canada

April 17-20, 2001

7th Edition of La Conférence de
Montréal: Free Trade in the Americas,
Challenges and Perspectives
Montreal, Canada

April 18-19, 2001

Hemispheric Trade and Sustainability
Symposium, Quebec City, Canada

April 20-22, 2001

3rd Summit of the Americas
Quebec City, Canada

CONTACT US!

**Canadian Foundation for the Americas/
Fondation canadienne pour les Amériques**
1 Nicholas Street, Suite 720
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 787
Tel: (613) 562-0005/Fax (613) 562-2525
Email focal@focal.ca

Summit of the Americas Center (SOAC)

Florida International University
University Park, Miami, Florida 33199
Tel: (305) 348-2894/Fax (305) 348-3593
Email summit@fiu.edu