



THE CANADIAN
CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

LA CHAMBRE
DE COMMERCE
DU CANADA

Sponsored by | Preferred airline

AIR CANADA 



Special Edition: 5 Minutes for Business

Canucks in the Volunteer State

Guest Column by Perrin Beatty, President & CEO, The Canadian Chamber of Commerce

July 25, 2017

Want to understand the reality of trade in North America? Start at the [FedEx Super Hub](#) in Memphis, Tennessee at 1:00 a.m., watching the incredible flood of 3.3 million packages daily, ripping with machine-like efficiency over 300,000 conveyor belts spread out over 862 acres.

Our delegation's four days in Tennessee were designed to provide an opportunity to make the case for Canada. The southern reputation for hospitality is well-deserved in Tennessee. And it seemed like everyone has a connection to Canada. I discovered that the Mayor of Nashville, Megan Barry, once worked for Nortel, that FedEx's 4,000 pilots train on Canadian-made flight simulators and that Memphis residents can enjoy poutine and Canadian beer at the area's two Kooky Canuck restaurants.

And who says Americans don't know much about Canada? I met dozens of people who appreciate the importance of Canadian businesses, often because of large Canadian investments. We visited CN's massive intermodal hub, located slightly outside of Memphis. This hub is CN's gateway to the south, where it can switch containers from one mode of transportation to the other easily. These connections helped us spread the word about the benefits of doing business with Canada.

Most folks weren't aware that Canada was their biggest trade partner, but they were happy to hear it. Currently, there is nearly \$14 billion of trade between Tennessee and Canada (that's more than our trade with France and Italy combined), and over 170,000 jobs in Tennessee depend on trade with Canada. The numbers are astonishing, and when I met Matt Wiltshire, Director of Nashville's Economic and Community Development Office, he enthusiastically offered to help spread the word.

We had very positive discussions about NAFTA. When we met the Memphis Chamber, the participants rallied around the idea of "do no harm." We agreed that although NAFTA can and should be modernized, the current structure should be the starting point, without having to reinvent the agreement. Overall, the Americans we met believed the NAFTA renegotiation will go well. That's why this work is so important.

Last week the U.S. Trade Representative released its [objectives for renegotiating NAFTA](#). There are areas of concern for us, but it emphasizes building upon the current NAFTA relationship. However, we worry the scope of the negotiations is extraordinarily ambitious—everything from dispute resolution to rules of origin, services, intellectual property. A major rethink could take years.

In Washington, politicians will be under pressure to talk tough and tweet crazy things. The negotiators will set "red lines," deadlines and "deal breakers." Things can get hot. I remember the Cabinet meeting when Brian Mulroney ordered our negotiators to walk away from the Canada-U.S. talks. But behind the rhetoric and theatre, Tennesseans reassured us that real business people are still sensible, cooperative and ambitious.

Whether it's a fight over NAFTA or any other friction between our countries, it is so important that we have business allies who will stand with us to say that Canada is a friend, an ally and a partner.

Our next stop is Texas and then on to Georgia. If you'd like to participate in any of our delegations, please [email us](#). If you're looking for more info, click [here](#).

For more information, please contact:

Hendrik Brakel
Senior Director, Economic, Financial & Tax Policy
613.238.4000 (284) | hbrakel@chamber.ca