

# US PRESIDENT BIDEN'S FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO CANADA

March 23-24, 2023

## SUMMARY

On Thursday, March 23, United States President Joe Biden arrived in Ottawa with First Lady Dr. Jill Biden for their first official visit to Canada since assuming office nearly two years ago. The White House called the President's 27-hour visit an important opportunity to "reaffirm the United States' commitment to the US-Canada partnership and promote our shared security, shared prosperity, and shared values."

Governor General Mary Simon, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland and several members of Trudeau's cabinet greeted Biden at the Ottawa airport last night, before the President headed to Rideau Cottage for a social gathering with the Prime Minister and his wife, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau.

On Friday, the main portion of Biden's visit kicked off with a welcoming ceremony inside the West Block of Canada's Parliament, followed by bilateral meetings with the Prime Minister and federal ministers.

The Prime Minister then welcomed President Biden to the House of Commons for an address to Parliamentarians and invited dignitaries. Trudeau began his welcoming remarks by thanking President Biden for his friendship to Canada, and highlighting close economic, environmental and security ties between the two countries.

Biden's 34-minute address spoke to the strength of the US-Canada relationship, thanking Trudeau for his own partnership and friendship. Biden made multiple references to the closeness of both countries, saying that Canadians and Americans are "two people, two countries, sharing one heart." He described the unstoppable force of Canada and the United States working together when it comes to tackling climate change, a changing economy, and an increasingly dangerous world.

Both Trudeau and Biden highlighted key areas of collaboration between the two countries on priority issues such as support for Ukraine, efforts to combat the ongoing Russian aggression, and support for the NATO alliance. Following the President's address, the two held a joint media availability, taking questions from reporters. Questions from the press touched on China, Roxham Road, Canada's role in Haiti, the banking crisis, American provisions, election interference, and pipelines.

To end the night, the Prime Minister hosted an official dinner for the President and First Lady at the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum, along with a few hundred VIPs. The Prime Minister's remarks touched upon his earlier speech in the House of Commons and highlighted the need for continued collaboration between both countries going forward, especially on the world stage. President Biden emphasized in his own remarks that he is optimistic about the future of the relationship between both countries.

## KEY COMMITMENTS

Following the President's address, the two released a joint statement highlighting eight key areas where both countries will continue collaboration in what is being called a *Roadmap for a Renewed US-Canada Partnership*. Most notable is the expansion of the Safe Third Country Agreement to apply not only at designated ports of entry, but across the entire land border, including internal waterways. These changes come into effect on March 25, 2023, eliminating the loophole allowing migrants to enter Canada through the unofficial border crossing in Quebec at Roxham Road. Additionally, Canada has committed to welcoming 15,000 migrants on a humanitarian basis from the Western Hemisphere, over the course of a year.

Another emerging issue addressed by the leaders was the ongoing security crisis in Haiti. Canada has committed to investing an additional \$100M to provide enhanced policing supports for the Haitian National Police.

On clean energy and good jobs, the two countries are committing to work together to deepen economic integration, accelerate the deployment of clean technologies, and focus on workforce development. This includes a commitment to launch a one-year Energy Transformation Task Force chaired by the US Special Presidential Coordinator for Global Infrastructure, and Canada's Deputy Prime Minister, to work across the spectrum of the clean economy.

As noted by President Biden in his address, the two countries will continue to support investments in critical minerals and semiconductor supply chains by creating the Advanced Technology Data and Security Dialogue to help deepen collaboration. Additionally, Canada will be investing \$250M for semiconductor projects in the near term.

Both countries also announced a renewed commitment to preserving and restoring the Great Lakes, with Canada investing a historic \$240M over the next decade.

On defence and security, the focus was on NORAD, with Canada confirming a commitment to procure and field two next generation Over-The-Horizon Radar (OTHR) systems and make a \$7.5B investment in infrastructure to support the arrival of Canada's new F-35 fighter jets.

The opioid crisis was also addressed, with both countries committing to expand multi-agency cooperation to combat cross-border fentanyl and precursor chemical trafficking and support interdictions and investigations through the US-Canada Opioids Action Plan.

Both leaders reaffirmed and recognized the importance of inclusion and equal opportunity to both democracies, committing to continue to work toward fair and inclusive policies that benefit all citizens, regardless of sex, gender, or sexual orientation; race, ethnicity, or religion; age; disability; or geography. In his remarks to the House of Commons, Biden noted that both Cabinets have gender parity.

OUR POINT OF VIEW



HON. JAMES MOORE, P.C., FORMER MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, EGA SENIOR ADVISOR

The visit by President Biden to Canada is a signal that relatively healthy diplomatic norms between Canada and the United States have returned. It is clear that Prime Minister Trudeau and President Biden have a functional and engaged relationship, and, at all times, this is fundamental for Canada’s well-being.

On the substance of this visit, the Roxham Road agreement is politically important for Prime Minister Trudeau, and shows the relationship that he has with President Biden can yield action. It will take time to see whether the substance of the new agreement will safeguard our border security. But there are a lot of inconsistencies in the American messaging about their friendship with Canada, including the future of Line 5 while Michigan takes action to shut this critical piece of infrastructure, and rejecting the Keystone XL Pipeline while the US approves the Willow Project in Alaska. Further, the US Inflation Reduction Act, which is effectively a decade-long industrial policy that puts “America first” on procurement, infrastructure and energy priorities, will challenge Canada’s ability to compete within North America.

NOTABLE MOMENTS

In addition to the commitments made by the Prime Minister and President during the visit, there were a number of notable moments including:

- The attendance of the Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, the two Canadians detained in China for nearly three years, for President Biden’s address and dinner. Both Trudeau and Biden recognized them in their remarks, leading to standing ovations.
- In his nearly 40-minute address to the House of Commons, media described as “impassioned,” President Biden managed to make those in attendance laugh by taking a jab at Toronto’s NHL team, the Maple Leafs, citing his dislike for the team because they beat the Philadelphia Flyers earlier in the year, the team from Dr. Jill Biden’s hometown.
- In his address, President Biden announced that in a few days, NASA would be announcing an international team of astronauts that will crew Artemis II, the first human voyage to the moon since the Apollo mission. The crew will consist of three Americans and one Canadian.
- Sophie Grégoire Trudeau hosted First Lady Dr. Jill Biden at the Rideau Curling Club where they met a number of players and chatted with a group of teens to discuss the benefits of sports for mental health. The pair then headed to the National Art Gallery to tour an exhibit.



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