

Intelligence MEMOS



From: Stockwell Day

To: US Election Observers

Date: November 5, 2024

Re: **ONLY IF IMPRUDENCE PREVAILS WILL A TRUMP PRESIDENCY BE DISASTROUS FOR CANADA**

The ability of Canada's political leaders to treat our relationship with the US, and with the US president, with the highest priority and care, has always been of paramount importance.

With today's US election on a knife's edge, and facing a strong likelihood that Donald Trump could return to the White House, this point bears repeating.

On this score, I was surprised to see the recent [Commentary](#) from John Manley and Martha Hall Findlay. I've enjoyed the opportunity of working with Mr. Manley in political and corporate settings. In my tenure as Leader of Canada's Official Opposition, he and I differed and concurred, always respectfully. Nevertheless, I think these public statements – these personal denigrations – risk damaging future relations with the US should Trump become president again.

Make no mistake: At the negotiating table the Americans are always "USA First." The risk of punitive tariffs and the 2026 renewal of CUSMA (NAFTA 2.0) pose serious risks for Canada, regardless of who wins today. Mr. Manley and Ms. Hall Findlay did a fair job pointing out Canada's trade challenges. Despite that, mutually beneficial agreements can be achieved, even with a Trump presidency. As Canada's former Minister of International Trade, I saw that tough-minded Americans can nevertheless grudgingly respond at times to genuine expressions of collegial respect.

In 2007, the US was determined to initiate, without delay, new passport security requirements at our previously open border. They showed little sympathy for the disastrous effect this would have on Canadian business if our request for a six-month delay was not granted. In August of that year, Stephen Harper hosted President George W. Bush, along with US Homeland Security czar Michael Chertoff and myself as Minister of Public Safety to discuss a variety of security and terrorism related issues.

The passport issue remained unresolved. As the meeting broke, President Bush asked if I wanted to join him for a mountain bike workout through the forests north of Montebello, QC. It was during that (breathless) ride that Mr. Bush asked me to explain in more detail Canada's need for the extra six months. His questions were tough but insightful. At the end of the ride, as the Secret Service 'riders' were escorting the president back to his quarters, he turned and called out, "Hey Stock, tell Steve he can have his delay."

Hence, at times, respectful relationships can yield results. Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney discovered this with President Ronald Reagan on acid rain. Due to the potential impact of mitigation on industry, the reduction of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides was a complicated issue for the US president to manage. But respectful relationships with the US presidents prevailed. Updates to the US *Clean Air Act of 1990* were followed by the Canada-US Air Quality Agreement signed by Messrs. Mulroney and Bush in Ottawa in 1991. The subsequent rapid reduction in acid rain marks this as a major environmental policy accomplishment forged through Canada-US relations.

With the potential of another Trump presidency, Canadian leaders will not get very far by publicly slamming the possible next US President as "vain, crude, cheating, bullying, misogynist" and even fearmongering about him being "a clear and present danger to democracy." In putting forward these comments, we go against our best prospects as we pursue "the art of the deal" with the possible next president of the USA.

Stockwell Day is a former leader of the Official Opposition and held multiple cabinet portfolios at the federal and provincial level.

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