

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Thomas R. Carper
*“Securing the Border: Understanding Threats and
Strategies for the Northern Border”*
April 22, 2015

As prepared for delivery:

I would like to thank Chairman Johnson for holding this important hearing on the security challenges we face along our northern border. Over the past several months, this Committee has spent a great deal of time trying to better understand the security challenges we face along our lengthy southern border.

But as large and challenging as our southern border is, our shared border with Canada is even larger and comes with its own unique opportunities and risks. Our shared border with Canada is the largest in the world, spanning 4,000 miles. When you add Alaska, that shared boundary grows to 5,500 miles.

It’s also an economic powerhouse for both of our countries. According to one estimate, 300,000 people and \$1.5 billion in trade cross the U.S.-Canada border every day. That is something to celebrate, even as we pay close attention to addressing potential border threats.

Last Congress, I had the pleasure of visiting Detroit with Senator Levin and North Dakota with Senator Heitkamp, where I saw first-hand some of these opportunities and challenges.

The risks along the northern border include both northbound and southbound flows of drugs, other transnational criminal activity, and potential exploitation by terrorists.

Since 9/11, we have increased our border staffing and technology footprint along the northern border. For instance, there are roughly 2,000 Border Patrol agents stationed along the northern border now, compared to just 340 in 2001. And, there are 3,700 CBP officers at the northern ports of entry, an increase of about a one third over the last 10 years. We now have several CBP drones patrolling high above our northern border, as well.

Is there more we can do to better secure our northern border? Sure there is; however, we can no more seal this border than we can totally close our southern border. Instead, we need to better understand the risks associated with it. Then, we need to implement the most cost-effective strategies to buy down those risks. And, we need to do this while sustaining the robust trade and travel relationships that benefit us and our neighbors so greatly.

Not unlike our southern border, force-multiplying technology such as aerial surveillance, underground sensors, and cameras on mobile towers can greatly increase our ability to detect and respond to threats along this vast northern border.

Good intelligence and strong information sharing networks can also help make the best use of limited staffing and resources. Fortunately, our relationship with Canada is perhaps the best ‘force multiplier’ we could wish for. Canadian and United States agents are working closer and

closer together in a number of areas to enhance our shared security and ensure our shared prosperity.

I look forward to hearing more about how this relationship is working under the 2011 'Beyond the Border' framework, and any areas where progress is still needed. I also hope the witnesses will address whether there are successful practices at the northern border – either for increasing security or expediting trade or both – that could be replicated at the southern border if they are not already.

Finally, I continue to hope that our focus on border security will become part of a larger conversation on how to fix our broken immigration system and pass comprehensive immigration reform.