STRUGGLING WITH 'SECURITY': NATIONAL SECURITY AND LABOUR IN THE PORTS

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> A lot of people don't realize how invasive this whole process is [...] I'd love to hire you Tom, but Transport Canada says that you don't get a security clearance. So I lose my job, but I'm not fired, and because you're not fired there is no severance pay, and good luck at the federal court of Canada [...] it'll cost you twenty or twenty-five thousand dollars to get through. There's no compensation. If you get there [...] how many years has that been? I lose my family, I lose my house, I lose my job, and it's all because there's been a mistake, or somebody's given erroneous or false information.¹

ver the past five years, governments around the world have been busy crafting new policies, institutions, and rationales for national securitization. Largely at the behest of the United States, they have been compelled to define a wide range of new security measures. The 'war on terror' has focused heavily on securing the movement of people and goods across national borders, and the profiling of suspected terrorists on the basis of nationality, religion and ethnicity. This is the case, despite the fact that perhaps the only common thread to the various agents of non-state terror in the US, from Timothy McVeigh to Osama bin Laden, is some form of training by the US military.² This incredible disjuncture between perceived 'risks' and response continues to inform dominant conceptions of security, as well as the practices they organize. While the control of human migration has intensified alongside the globalization of production over the past few decades, border control has nevertheless been rapidly reworked since 2001. Mobility has been newly constrained for many people, largely through racial profiling and its impacts on no-fly lists, security certificates, and international 'information' sharing. On the other hand, the movement of goods across national borders has been liberalized in recent decades to facilitate the massive volume of cargo movement that constitutes global trade. However, since 9/11, politicians and security officials have become increasingly concerned about the incredible volume of unchecked cargo crossing borders. They are particularly anxious about the mysterious contents of shipping containers.

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The competing demands of 'economy' and 'security' have placed international ports at the centre of national security debates. In fact, key security initiatives target transport workers, who at once play a pivotal role in policing the territorial borders of the nation and are central to the global movement of goods. Security clearance programs are under development for port workers that will severely compromise employment security by making workers subject to extensive screenings that violate privacy, allow for job suspension based on 'reasonable suspicion' of terrorist affiliation, and offer no independent appeals process. New security regulations threaten to institutionalize racial profiling and directly undermine collective agreements and civil rights. Moreover, there are plans to generalize these programs across the transport sector - a large part of the labour force that includes trucking, mass transit, airport, and rail. In this paper, I look at struggles over port security regulations in Canada. I discuss the creative political response, particularly by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) - Canada, which represents west coast port workers, in their coalition work to reform federal initiatives. I suggest that national security policy, as backdoor labour policy, works to institutionalize 'anti-social' forms of security. For port workers, security is already a dominant concern, but as these precedents are generalized beyond port workers, security policy will become an increasingly critical issue for the labour movement more broadly.

'SECURING' MOBILITY: TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS AND THE BORDER

Only nine days after September 11, 2001, the US government began a massive reorganization of domestic and international security infrastructure. This took place through the creation of the Office of Homeland Security 'at home', as well as by placing demands for significant regulatory change on foreign governments. International shipping was an important area of experimentation. The Container Security Initiative (CSI), a program defined and administered by American authorities, posts US customs officials in dozens of foreign ports to inspect US-bound cargo. The International Ship and Port-Facility Security (ISPS) code, on the other hand, is defined and administered by the United Nation's International Marine Organization but was crafted at the direct behest of the United States. The ISPS defines minimum standards for security with which international ports and ships must comply. In 2004, the code came into effect globally. It was adopted by 152 nations and requires the compliance of 55,000 ships and 20,000 ports. Signing countries must implement mandatory policies outlined in one part of the code, and more flexible, voluntary regulations in a second section of the ISPS.

Transportation security has been an area of extensive Canadian cooperation with US securitization since 2001. Security initiatives have focused

on border crossings on land, air and sea, with Canadian officials largely adopting the analyses and priorities of their US counterparts. Mythologies of Canada's 'leaky border', which is said to be a 'sieve for terrorists', have circulated in official reports and documents south of the border, and have been adopted uncritically in the assessments of Canadian politicians and security officials. While Canadian ports have been screening containers at a higher rate than US ports for many years, US officials have nevertheless deemed these to be dangerous spaces that need to be secured (Larocque 2004, Cowen and Bunce 2006). Canadian officials echo these assessments. For instance, in 2003, Canadian Senator Colin Kenny authored a report entitled Our Porous Ports, which marshalled these mythologies. Ironically, these accounts suggest that deferring to US demands and plans for security is an *expression of Canadian sovereignty*. As one report of Canada's Standing Senate Committee on Security and National Defence (SSCOSND) outlined, a committee which Senator Kenny chairs, 'passivity' creates risks that "the United States will unilaterally move to defend its security perimeter - which it primarily defines as North America - without Canadian knowledge or consent." Kenny and the SSCOSND argue that if Canada does not provide an adequate level of security at its ports, the United States is likely to take unilateral action (SSCOSND 2002:24).

Immediately after 9/11, Transport Canada (TC) embarked on a tremendous expansion of people, policy and resources dedicated to security. Officials began "drafting and revising hundreds of security requirements" (TC web), while at the same time initiating a dramatic expansion of institutional strength in this area. The existence of a security component at TC is not new, but prior to 9/11 it consisted of a small group of inter-modal staff. After 2001, transport security was specialized and expanded such that an entire Maritime Security division was initiated, with 60 full time staff in Headquarters alone, and many rumored to be recruited from the US military and security 'communities'. As early as October 11, 2001 the Interdepartmental Marine Security Working Group was formed, chaired by TC. This group worked to define agreements with the US over enhanced security, including eventually, a bilateral agreement with the US Coast Guard.

A crucial task for the TC Marine Security division during the period after 2001 was to define Canada's interpretation of the ISPS code, to be implemented through the Marine Transportation Security Regulations (MTSR). Security and economy are deeply entwined in these regulations, as they are in other post 9/11-security plans. TC insists that the new security requirements introduced in the MTSR are "consistent with the approach of Canada's major trading partners." These are provisions "determined to be necessary based on risk assessments and the need to ensure the unimpeded flow of Canadian maritime trade." National security is conceptualized as interchangeable with the security of trade flows, and specifically, trade flows with the US. Indeed, one of four key

objectives of Canada's 2001 Anti-Terrorism Plan, Bill C-36, is "to keep the Canada-U.S. border secure and open to legitimate trade." Maintaining trade flows with the US is also the basis of the policy and language of TC. This 2003 statement could hardly be more direct:

Canada's marine sector supports a vital trade gateway, connecting Canada to the world. In 2000, Canadian international marine trade, including traffic between Canada and the U.S., was valued at more than \$100 billion, oneeighth of our total trade. Canada's marine sector employs more than 30,000 people. The Government of Canada's marine security package is designed to help protect the Canadian marine sector by implementing initiatives to increase our capacity to prevent, detect and manage security threats.

'SECURING' PORT WORKERS

Regulating port workers has been a central thrust of marine security plans in Canada and internationally. The ISPS code includes minimum standards for accessing and handling cargo, however governments are free to define the specific means for meeting or exceeding them. Transport Canada's initial proposal for worker security well exceeded the requirements of the ISPS code. The Marine Facilities Restricted Area Access Clearance Program (MFRAACP), proposed to create secure areas around ports and regulate access for workers with a security clearance. Access to restricted areas would be granted following extensive background checks on workers and their families including credit checks, details about immigration status, information about skin, hair and eye colour, and travel histories. Workers who were successful in obtaining clearance would carry identity cards that would be linked to security perimeters surrounding ports. The Minister of Transportation would be free to designate restricted areas according to his own discretion.

The MFAACP was modeled after the Airport Restricted Area Access Clearance Program, implemented in the wake of the 1985 Air India bombings, now commonly and awkwardly referred to as 'Canada's 9/11'. TC initially planned to finalize the MFRAACP in November 2004, and anticipated spending \$11.8 million of their own funds as well as \$1.9 million from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and \$7.1 from the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) on the initiative. However, TC was off on all counts. They radically underestimated the amount of resistance that would emerge in response to the proposed regulation, and so the time and cost associated with developing new regulations. Critique of the MFRAACP came from diverse groups with wide ranging concerns. In Vancouver, home to Canada's largest port and the place where security regulations were initially developed, longshore and warehouse workers, maritime employers, cruise ship operators, and even

the Port of Vancouver raised concerns. These focused on the foundational assumptions about port operations that informed TC's conception of security, and which made the airport an inappropriate model for marine security.

Crucial differences characterize port and airport operations that implicate both the spatial and social organization of work, and so its potential securitization. For instance, it is well established among marine security specialists that in order to protect containers from tampering, security needs to be addressed throughout the complex spatial networks that constitute contemporary cargo distribution; from their initial packing at production sites all over the world, and across the inter-modal and international transport networks that take them to distribution centers and consumer markets³. The ILWU-Canada picked up on this point and argued that meaningful security was undermined by the proposed regulations that targeted a small circumscribed area, and so only a small subset of people with access to containers, for security screening. Managers and employees of shipping companies who did not work within the restricted areas of the port, even people who pack containers a few yards from the designated restricted zone, would not be subject to the MFRAACP.

Airport work is also an inappropriate model for the port security because of its social organization. Airport work is a highly casualized form of employment and so the federal government was able to push through regulations for airport workers without much consultation or concern for labour or civil rights. However, this strong-arm approach would not work in the ports where unions have proud histories of worker solidarity and have waged bold struggles for employment security and international social justice.

The ILWU-Canada has been at the forefront of challenges to the proposed regulations. In meetings, written reports, and media articles, they have argued that the MFRAACP was "offensive" to the "rights, freedoms, and privacy" of ILWU members, by virtue of the demand for excessive personal and family information including unspecified information on spouses, parents, and spouses' parents, details about postsecondary institutions attended, credit history, criminal history, personal details including skin colour, and five years of residential, employment, and international travel history (ILWU 2004). Workers would furthermore have to reapply for the security clearance every 5 years. The ILWU also critiqued the broad scope and weak protection of information that would be collected by the CSIS and the RCMP, citing the "highly subjective and fundamentally unjust security clearance criteria", based on suspicion without any need to demonstrate charges or convictions, and importantly, the lack of an independent appeals process. The ILWU highlighted the fact that the sweeping and subjective nature of 'reasonable suspicion' as grounds for denying clearance meant that members could potentially lose their employment "on the basis of concerns that go well beyond those of preventing terrorist acts" (ILWU 2004)⁴.

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The implications for employment security were severe; proposed regulations would make workers vulnerable to indiscriminate suspension, thus directly undermining collective agreements, as well as creating potential for employers to exploit the regulations in order to deliberately circumvent collective agreements. The ILWU emphasized how uneven the impact of the proposed regulations could be in terms of creating insecurity for particular groups of workers. They outlined how the regulations would institutionalize racial profiling and systemic discrimination based on national origin, and could be used to target union activists and other dissident political voices. The MFRAACP was "a carefully veiled employment discrimination policy through the application of various types of stereotyping - racial, political, union activist, etc." they argued (ILWU 2004, emphasis in original). A documented history of racial profiling within Canadian Security and Intelligence institutions, alongside the significant pressure to expedite large numbers of security clearances by an already overburdened security bureaucracy, would create all the conditions to rationalize racial profiling. The RCMP and CSIS, who are responsible for security checks, are widely known to be engaging in racial profiling of just this sort (Clark 2005, O'Neil 2004, Teotonio 2006). In the wake of the Maher Arar inquiry, countless groups and individuals, including even Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper, recommended better oversight of the operations of CSIS, the RCMP and Transport Canada. Transport Canada's recent 'information package' on the security clearances, in fact, directly outlines how "travel history is collected to see if an applicant has traveled to a country where there may be security concerns" (TC 2006). This clearly is a direct invitation for the profiling of 'risky' workers based on simplistic assumptions about 'risky' regions.

Importantly, the ILWU also suggested that the MFRAACP could be used to target workers for crime as easily as for suspected terrorist affiliation. They questioned how national security would be served by this blurring of categories, and how any form of security could be instituted by undermining the privacy, security and civil rights of citizens. This concern is a serious one. It has become common sense among security 'experts' that the boundary between terror and crime is an outdated one and simply slows them down in their 'hunt'. 'Crime and risk consultant' and author Chris Mathers recently explained in an interview in Canadian Security Magazine, "organized crime and terrorism are two horns of the same goat." He repeated American mythologies that these are particular problems for Canada because of its "relaxed approaches to immigration and criminal prosecution and because it is adjacent to both one of the largest markets and the largest target in the world – the United States." The blurring of terror and crime is furthermore the foundation for a spate of new security and defense policy in the US. As H. Allen Holmes, the former Assistant Secretary of Defense has said, special operations forces are increasingly working at "the seam between war and crime" (Goss 2006). Indeed, countless security and 'anti-terrorism'

strategies⁵ redefine military and civilian authority through programs like Military Assistance to Civil Authorities [MACA], Defense Support to Civil Authorities [DSCA] and emergency preparedness (NYT 2006).

In all this, the ILWU focused their lobby for reform on the three most pernicious elements of the plan for labour: the lack of meaningful appeals process, the scope of information collected for the security clearance, and the range of workers who would be subject to the screening. None of these elements of the proposed regulations had the potential to enhance security of any kind.

COMPETITIVE CITIES AND SECURITY

The ILWU, working with the support of the Canadian Labour Congress, was largely rebuffed by TC in their efforts to reform regulations. But port workers were not the only ones who saw major problems with the MFRAACP. The British Columbia Maritime Employers Association (BCMEA), and cruise ship and terminal operators were all concerned about the effects of the regulations on the efficiency and competitiveness of the port. Port cities work in tight relations of competition with neighbouring port cities. National security policy was presenting itself as a significant obstacle to competitiveness in that it would potentially make the efficiencies of less securitized ports a competitive advantage. This is because the spatial logic of national security, when conceptualized as a tightening of national borders, directly interferes with supranational trade flows that are so crucial to globalized production systems. Corporations that rely on the transnational movement of goods have been reliable opponents of border security initiatives. For example, in order to keep the massive volume of commodities flowing from production in Asia to US markets, Wal-Mart has been systematically subverting port security initiatives for several years (AFL-CIO 2006). 'National security' may have been "a code word for the defence of powerful business interests" (Kinsman et al 2000: 3) in the past, however, in an era of global production where a 'geo-economic' more than 'geopolitical' logic is dominant in organizing the geography of political and economic power (Smith 2004, Cowen & Smith 2006), this claim needs to be reassessed. As The Economist (2002) has observed, "there is tension between the needs of international security and those of global trade." In this context, the shifting geographies of production have yielded some surprising informal and formal coalitions against national securitization.

Despite a long history of opposition at the negotiating table, the ILWU and the BCMEA agreed to work together in a strategic alliance to lobby for change. They set out to build a broad coalition of local voices in order to push TC to address their concerns. Through letter writing campaigns and formal and informal presentations to employers' groups in the Vancouver area, the ILWU – BCMEA coalition mobilized the official support of dozens of marine organizations. They organized delegations to municipal council meetings, and by March of 2005, three councils passed motions calling for the federal government to revisit the MFRAACP. The Vancouver, North Vancouver, and Burnaby councils endorsed the coalition in their critique of federal proposals and called for security plans that would be less intrusive and more focused on actual security threats. City councilors made eloquent speeches at council meetings that connected the MFRAACP to other instances of damaging government incursions into civil rights and political freedoms in the name of national security. They named the October Crisis and the Maher Arar case as important precedents that must be avoided in the future.⁶

The work of the coalition against the federal government reveals some of the tensions between national security projects and an urban-based vision of economic competitiveness. A geopolitical vision of territorial sovereignty and strong national borders stands in conflict with an urban scale vision of global competitiveness, promoted through the 'creativity' and efficiency of local actors and infrastructure. These tensions persist even as both projects are anchored in neoliberal conceptions of economy.

Largely as a result of the economic clout of many of the partners who endorsed the Vancouver coalition's position, TC was compelled to make some concessions in the proposed regulations. Some of these concessions were purely symbolic, like the renaming of the MFRAACP in June 2005 to the Marine Transport Security Clearance Program (MTSCP), which TC staff thought was less aggressive sounding than the 'frap' of the old acronym. More substantive changes followed a major multi-party review of options for the security clearance. In 2005, TC announced that a 'pilot project' would take place in Vancouver, to be followed by a similar trial in Montreal and Halifax. Leading up to the pilot project, the coalition hired a consultant to perform a 'process flow' mapping that aimed to educate TC on the spatial configuration of contemporary port work. This mapping helped convince TC that a blanket application of the security clearance to everyone working within a designtated area would not contribute to security. But the pilot project, which began in September of 2005, was terminated somewhat abruptly in late July of 2006. TC gave labour three days notice before the reformed regulations were published in the Canada Gazette, part 1. This was before the Montreal and Halifax reviews were even initiated. Despite active opposition to the reformed regulations the regulatory amendments were published in the Canada Gazette, part 2, on November 15, and the following day, Minister of Transport Infrastructure and Communities, Laurence Cannon, announced the program's implementation.

TC claims to have "used stakeholder input throughout the development of the proposed regulations and has incorporated substantial changes [to the proposed regulations] as a result" (TC 2006). These changes are in three areas. First, TC claims to have developed "a risk-based criteria to focus the proposed MTSCP on specific designated duties and smaller restricted areas" that would require security clearance, however, the details of this criteria remain a mystery to labour unions and the Minister retains the power to unilaterally designate restricted port areas. Second, TC claims to have established an independent review mechanism for the MTSCP, however, the proposed 'Office of Reconsideration' would be located within TC and the review would include the staff person who initially refused a security clearance. Finally, Transport Canada claims that the regulations would "only request the minimum information required to provide for a fair and effective assessment of an applicant's risk to the security of the marine transportation system," and yet, while the reformed regulations do indeed reduce the range of information to be collected for the clearance, the protection of that information is actually weaker than in the initial proposals. The MFRAACP contained a provision that the information collected would not be used for any purpose other than determining whether or not the person was a threat to national security. ILWU president, Tom Dufresne (2006), explains that this clause "was taken out of the MFRAACP which caused us a lot of concern. But they put back in a watered down version saying that they would be governed by the Privacy Act, which is not as good as the other. We wanted a provision that would say that the information would not be shared with foreign governments or with anyone else outside of Transport Canada. In other words, the information would go into a sealed box in the corner and the only people who have access to it would be Marine Security Personnel."

The ILWU remains deeply concerned about the regulations, however, other actors who were central to the coalition like the BCMEA, are largely satisfied (Pasacreta 2006, Kee 2006). It seems that TC's concessions may have created a strategic wedge in the powerful, although perhaps transient, Vancouver coalition. This raises profound questions for the future of economic security and rights for workers in a global, national and neoliberal security regime.

ANTI-SOCIAL SECURITY?

[Unions and their members] would never agree to have a collective agreement with no grievance procedure in it, without some final arbitrator making the decision on whether or not a person is guilty of an offence or what the penalty should be. And yet, with the security regulation - the internal review they're proposing – there is no independent, transparent, affordable appeals process other than going to the federal court of Canada. And then all you might get is 'by the way, you were right'. Who do I go to for compensation? There is no compensation. (Dufresne, 2006)

What does it mean that national security policy is quietly dismantling social protection? Social security has not always been a casualty of war. In fact,

crises of national security have historically been important moments for the genesis of social forms of security (Cowen 2005, 2006). In the past, the wartime strength of organized labour, in conjunction with the state's need for productive and reproductive labour, combined and yielded social protections. As eminent welfare state scholar Frances Piven (2004: 3) has argued, "historically, governments waging war sooner or later tried to compensate their people for the blood and wealth they sacrificed," but "this period is markedly different." Indeed, today, we hear little talk of building national society through social security. Neoliberal globalization has shattered the national nexus such that new demands for security are drowning out social forms of security. Security discourse is everywhere, and it is often still described as a national project, but in a competitive world of global trade we are told that security is a Darwinian project of economic survival. This is clear in the major Canadian security documents discussed earlier that equate security and the flow of trade. The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence recently explained that "the first national imperative is the same as the first human imperative: survival" (SSCONSD 2004).

The challenge for today's security state is not to eliminate the border but to reconfigure it. North American states may be adopting some of the rhetoric of continental integration and even working to standardize key policies, for example through the Security and Prosperity Partnership Agreements, but there is no parallel here to the European 'solution' of loosening national borders to supranational labour⁷ and citizenship rights. As the SSCONSD (2005) argues, "we need the border," as it provides a "necessary separation of two discrete societies; and border crossings are valuable for monitoring the movement of people and goods between those societies to ensure that only legitimate people and goods pass back and forth." The border was never simply a line on a map, but its form and effects are becoming more complex today – particularly the maritime border. For instance, the Container Security Initiative extends the US border into ports of other countries around the world, meanwhile, Canada's MTSCP blurs 'internal' and 'external' security and surveillance by mixing state technologies for fighting terror and crime.

Alongside these dominant visions of security, port workers have been actively articulating alternative conceptions. These operate at very different spatial scales and prioritize *security at the scale of the body of the worker* through extensive lobbying for strengthened occupational health and safety legislation in a notoriously dangerous workplace. It was, in fact, work slowdowns in response to a growing number of workplace fatalities that provoked the massive struggles of the west coast US ports in 2002, culminating in the President's invocation of the Taft-Hartley Act. Port and transport workers' unions, operating at multiple scales, prioritize a *socially secure* and stable workforce that is well trained to handle the responsibilities that come with heightened insecurity in the workplace. Longshore workers also lobby for *transnational economic security* in solidarity with working peoples around the world. The ILWU has consistently organized actions against U.S. imperialism, coordinated labour actions with port workers around the world, and supported fair trade initiatives.

This begs the question of the potential for organizing strategies to contest dominant forms of security and strengthen alternatives. The case of the MTSCP suggests that there are both opportunities and limitations for labour to work in coalition with agents of competitive city politics, including their own employers. Tufts (2004: 50) looks at the "complexity and range of tactics being used by labour as they exercise agency in capitalist global cities," and sees their endorsement of competitive city visions as, in part, multi-scalar tactics through which they attempt to regulate "the harsher economic realities." Indeed, port workers' unions had enough in common with employers to jointly oppose national security plans. These critiques were framed out of concern for the efficiency and competitiveness of the port, as well as the civil and economic rights of workers. And yet, the common ground may not be solid enough to sustain lasting partnerships committed to alternatives for workers. In fact, one reading is that employers lobbied for reform until their own concerns for efficiency were met, and then largely accepted the pernicious effects for workers that persist. TC may have even found a strategic means of taking steam out of the coalition sails by offering concessions that would effectively satisfy some, but not all its members.

The Vancouver coalition was always conceptualized as a strategic alliance to respond to the immediate challenges of proposed regulations. However, security policy is a bigger beast than any single union, city, or even sector can slay. In the struggle against anti-social forms of security, the labour movement might find more lasting solidarity in the diverse social movements that are actively challenging the pernicious effects of securitization for citizenship. Given that security policy simultaneously undermines basic civil rights and labour protections, like in the case of the ports, through, for instance, racial profiling and the invasion of privacy, substantive solidarity may come from a more overt social unionism. Granted this is the longterm labour of movement building and is well underway at the Canadian Labour Congress, but no doubt, the proliferation of anti-social security makes this labour all the more pressing.

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NOTES

- 1. Tom Dufresne, 2006, President ILWU Canada & Canadian Maritime Workers Council
- 2. See Smith, N. Endgame of Globalization, 159.

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^{3.} For example, see Flynn 2004.

^{4.} TC did not provide a direct defense for 'reasonable suspicion' as a basis for denial of security clearance but instead argued that it was standard in other government departments dealing with security concerns and was thereby appropriate.
"It is important to note that the 'reasonable grounds to suspect' criterion is used in other Canadian legislation, including the *Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act*, the *Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act*, and, the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*," TC explained. "Therefore, they continued, "the reasonable grounds to suspect" criterion is appropriate for assessing eligibility for a transportation security clearance." See Canada (2006).

^{5.} See for example, Goss 2006, the speech by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (Sheridan 2000).

^{6.} See, in particular ,Councilor Craig Keating's comments at the North Vancouver council meeting on March 2, 2006. <u>http://www.cnv.org/c//DATA/1/321/2005%2003%2007.PDF</u>

^{7.} Perhaps with the important exception of professional and business travelers, whose movement is eased with advanced clearance programs.

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