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COMMENTARY ON CANADA'S DECISION TO PAY FOR U.S. CUSTOMS PLAZA AT THE NEW INTERNATIONAL TRADE CROSSING (NITC)

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Why will the U.S., the world's largest economy, allow Canada to pay for its customs plaza at the New International Trade Crossing (NITC), the planned new bridge between Windsor and Detroit? (Canada to Pay for Customs Plaza, Toronto Globe and Mail, February 19). Is it because the U.S. knows something we don't or won't admit: that the project is an expensive boondoggle? If that is the reason, our American neighbours are absolutely right. Truck traffic across the existing privately owned Ambassador Bridge has been declining since 1999 due to reduced manufacturing activity on both sides of the border. 2013/14 has seen a drop in truck traffic of 7%. The claim of persistent traffic bottlenecks on the above bridge is a myth. The Canada Border Services Agency consistently reports no delays. Congestion occurs only on long weekends and bottlenecks both real and perceived are due to inadequate numbers of inspection staff. The new \$4 billion bridge and related infrastructure (highways, inspections plazas) will have competitors: the Ambassador Bridge, the Blue Water Bridge at Sarnia and the projected Continental Rail Gateway, a high-clearance freight rail tunnel planned to start construction next year. Ottawa claims that the bridge cost will be covered by tolls. No it won't. The Canadian taxpayer will be on the hook for a very long time. The Ambassador wants to twin itself at its own expense. Let them do it with proper oversight and with a proper highway extension to it that takes traffic off local streets.

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