

**Interview of Former Democratic Secretary of Commerce
Mr. Mickey Kantor, WJR AM 760
Thursday , May 8th , 10:50 a.m.**

Former Secretary of Commerce under President Bill Clinton and current campaign advisor for Hillary Clinton, Mickey Kantor is interviewed on WJR regarding Radio-Canada's coverage of the DRIC bridge announcement. Because of audio difficulties, transcription may be incomplete in places.

Frank Beckmann: I believe it says by the Canadian Press – it looks like London Free Press, I'm not sure which and I apologise if I have not correctly identified the original source. You people have worked so hard on this story and I'll try to give you credit and I'll try best to sort that out ... (inaudible).

The United States and Canada will reportedly build a new bridge between Windsor and Detroit. Citing unnamed sources, Radio-Canada reports that it will be built at a cost of \$5-billion along side the existing Ambassador Bridge.

Of course this has been discussed for quite awhile by the State of Michigan which spent millions of dollars to investigate whether it is necessary, who should run it.

The French language network for the CBC says the site for the Canadian side of the bridge has already been picked and an official announcement will be made by mid-July with Prime Minister Harper in Canada is looking to seal the deal before President Bush leaves office early next year.

A 15 KM freeway will also be built ... (inaudible).

Let's get to the bottom of all of this from our side of the border with Mickey Kantor the previous Secretary of Commerce under President Bill Clinton on the other end of the line.

Hello, good morning.

Mickey Kantor: Good morning, Frank, how are you?

Mr. Beckmann: Good – nice to have you with us, Mickey.

Mr. Kantor: My pleasure.

Mr. Beckmann: Can you confirm, deny the report? Are they premature? What's the story?

Mr. Kantor: It looks as though our Canadian friends, I believe, they're trying to shove and push. Last time I looked, a sovereign country, the United States isn't doing something that we are even close to making a decision on.

The Draft Environmental Impact process under the National Environmental Policy Act is still going on, has not been completed. They may need a final Draft Environmental Impact statement to be approved by Transportation.

The White House has made no such decision – no one has – nor could they under the law.

And so our Canadian friends are trying to push us into spending a billion and half dollars from the US and Michigan for a bridge that is not necessary with traffic flows going down every year since 1999 – the existing Bluewater, the Ambassador Bridge, the Detroit-Windsor tunnel and other are adequate – more than adequate and can handle what's happening now and into the future.

So, as much as our Canadian friends would like us to spend our good money after we've invested so much in the Gateway project to link up the Ambassador Bridge to the 75, which you're well aware of, it seems a bit premature – it's almost silly at this point.

Mr. Beckmann: I thought the Moroun's, Matty Moroun and Dan Stamper would have been in favour of a second span here.

Mr. Kantor: To build a second span at the Ambassador Bridge – yes – in order to repair the 80-year-old span that carries 30% of all the trade between the US and Canada would make great sense. And its to be paid for with private money so we save a billion and half dollars. Private money is 800 million dollars in order to build with private money. Then the US government will match that 4 to 1 so Michigan can use the extra dollars to build badly needed infrastructure projects, highway projects, all over Michigan.

The point is, we don't need a new bridge. The crossings right now are more than adequate, they'll be adequate for a long time. And why would we spend all that US money just to satisfy Canadians who would like a different route to another bridge.

Mr. Beckmann: I'm a little confused here, Mickey, I must be honest. You said we don't need a bridge and yet we should build one privately?

Mr. Kantor: Yes. I should really apologise I'm probably not articulate enough. The existing Ambassador Bridge is 80 years old. It will need repairs, as we should to protect the health and safety of all our people in trucking that use that bridge. In order to repair it we're going to have to shut it down. In order to do that you need to build a new bridge.

Now the question is in building a new bridge would you rather a private party pay for it with the Detroit International Bridge Company, who have done this for 80 years and run this private bridge to carry 30% of the trade between the US and Canada, and then repair it, and then build a new bridge. So the US government and taxpayers spend a billion and half dollars for a bridge that's not necessary.

Mr. Beckmann: Sorry, but I'm still confused here. We do need a second span...

Mr. Kantor: Maybe you're not understanding me. In order to build the second span, which they have to in order to repair the first one. And you build also, this so-called DRIC proposal bridge – the Canadian sponsored bridge. If you build that you add one more bridge to the Bluewater, the Ambassador Bridge and the Detroit Windsor-Tunnel...

Mr. Beckmann: Alright, I see what you're saying now, Mickey. You're saying that this would be a third span and the second one with what you're trying to do. The way I pictured this, and this is where it was confusing for me and I apologise for that. I pictured this US-Canadian government bridge to be the original span – not the one the Ambassador Bridge Company wants to construct.

Mr. Kantor: What's interesting Frank, it really fascinates me, it's like bureaucratic momentum gone wild, especially on the Canadian side. Since 1999, the truck and car traffic across Bluewater and Ambassador and the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel has gone down every year – not gone up.

And why we need a third bridge, as you had described it correctly, is beyond my imagination. But in the meantime, the (inaudible) the Draft Environmental Assessment Impact is going forward, under US law, obviously, no-one in the US government can make any decision whether or not we should support this Canadian

sponsored bridge across the river. In other words – the third span you and I have agreed to talk about.

Mr. Beckmann: So, do you still want that second span (inaudible) would Canada have an interest in that bridge? Would the United States government have an interest in that bridge or would you build it privately?

Mr. Kantor: (inaudible) ...for 80 years that bridge has carried 30% of all the trade between the US and Canada across that bridge – that's critically important. Two, the US of course has an interest in co-operating with the Detroit International Bridge Company to make sure trade is secure (inaudible)...of course that is a major facility and very important to our economy and also to our security.

So of course the US government has an interest but here is what fascinates me.

Why not have a private company willing to build the bridge that's necessary rather than have the US government and taxpayers spend a billion and half dollars on a bridge that is unnecessary?

I keep scratching my head in some amazement over this.

Mr. Beckmann: Well obviously it's a very lucrative money making operation and government, and you know this from your time in government, Mickey. If any government – state, local, national sees a money making operation and they can somehow get involved in that and they see that as a way to go (inaudible) ... private enterprise. And if they can take that business away from you, they're not going to flinch.

Mr. Kantor: That's why we all have to, you know when we were in government, much to everyone's surprise, (inaudible) more jobs than anyone in American history had done, we tried to make sure that private activity was sponsored and promoted as much as possible. And government did only what was necessary to do. And that's what we (inaudible).

And the second thing is (inaudible) bridge across the river, all that's going to do is cannibalize the current traffic running over the Bluewater, the Ambassador and the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel, and make them (inaudible)...It is really is non-sensical.

Also, the Federal Government just spent a few years ago, \$400-million on expanding the Bluewater Bridge. 400 million more dollars than the Michigan Department of Transportation (inaudible) just to build another bridge to make it (inaudible) doesn't make a lot sense.

Mr. Beckmann: Could the government's of US and Canada, go ahead with this project and what sort of (inaudible) you mentioned the environmental study, is that is?

Mr. Kantor: They take the environmental study; they take the growing concern in congress of the expenditure of unnecessary dollars – the money for the new bridge, of course, is not even close to being appropriated, and there's going to be a fight over this because I think (inaudible) ... wait a minute, we just spent \$230 million of federal and state dollars on the gateway that's to build the new plaza at the Ambassador Bridge and the connections to 75. We had to close down 75 to finish the...and frankly the Ambassador Bridge just spent another \$108 million on top of that. Then we have this huge investment in a viable Ambassador Bridge and viable Bluewater bridge we spent \$400 million and yet we want to build another bridge that's not necessary?

If traffic was going up and there was a problem with capacity, which there's not – that's another question. But there's not a problem with capacity.

Mr. Beckmann: Well good luck in trying to fend them off. I don't know how you're going to do that if they've got their minds made up with government (inaudible).

Mr. Kantor: I got to tell ya. I think there's some doubt in Washington, including I hope that the Department of Transportation and the Bush administration and certainly in the congress, (inaudible) ... saying wait; let's stop and think and be rational here; let's not do something that isn't necessary at a time when we're going to have a \$410 billion deficit – (inaudible) .. I think that question is starting to be asked.

Mr. Beckmann: I hope so on behalf of all us. There's too much (inaudible) .. and it looks like we could be heading for more if this indeed does go through. But the bottom line is, this is premature, you don't think we'll going to see an announcement by mid-July do you?

Mr. Kantor: No, no, no. This is a long way from...what I'd call it (inaudible)...The Canadian government (inaudible) are going to

try and push this and push this for one because they don't like a private bridge that's been there for 80 years, they would like a public bridge that's probably a philosophical position the Canadians take.

And the second is they have committed themselves emotionally to this (inaudible) but we shouldn't be pushed around by the Canadians.

I've negotiated (inaudible) years when I was the United States treasurer in dealing with Canadians, you got to stand up once in awhile for our country and say this in not in our interests.

Mr. Beckmann: Is this in any way linked to that North American Super Highway that's supposed to run from Mexico, through the United States to Canada that the leaders of the three countries are all denying exists, but others are suspicious of and believe it will become a reality someday?

Mr. Kantor: You know, I don't know – that's a good question. I've not heard that. I just don't know the answer to your question.

Mr. Beckmann: Alright. Who owns the bridge at Buffalo at Niagara Falls?

Mr. Kantor: I have no idea, that's way beyond...

Mr. Beckmann: I was just curious whether it the government owned that or it was another privately owned bridge...