

## United States Protectionism Through Import Tariffs for Canada and Reciprocity Rr Laeny SULISTYAWATI<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract:

#### Purpose:

This paper explores the changing foreign policy of the United States (US) after Donald Trump took office as president for the second time, namely through the America First policy. The America First policy includes protectionist measures such as import tariffs on Canadian products of 25 percent on March 4, 2025.

#### Methodology:

The research method uses qualitative descriptive analysis. Data were collected through data collection techniques based on internet-based studies, digital books, previous research, journals and relevant sources.

#### Findings:

Canada is one of the largest exporting countries in the US with a total of 37.253 billion US during 2024. However, after President Trump was re-elected, economic relations between the US and Canada became heated. President Trump implemented an import tariff policy from Canada on the grounds of illegal immigration and fentanyl drugs. This policy is expected to protect jobs and increase income.

#### Implication:

However, government of Canada took retaliatory action by implementing 25 percent import tariff policy on imported goods from the US. Several businesses in Canada, particularly café industry, expressed support for the government's policy. The Canadian government also increased the budget to increase security at the border.

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the United States (US) and Canada has experienced ups and downs since the beginning. Geographically, the location of the US and Canada which are adjacent makes the two countries have a border. However, this border has caused disputes between the two countries. One of them is the long-running Dixon Entrance dispute between friendly neighbors. The roots of the dispute began in the 18th century, when the stakeholders who colonized the Alaska Panhandle region (a narrow strip of mountains, fjords and channel islands bordering modern British Columbia) were Britain and Russia, followed by the US. In fact, Canada and the US tried to reach a resolution, but everything reached a dead end in 1899 (Selkirk, 2019).

On the one hand, Canada is one of the largest trading partners for the US. This economic collaboration is driven by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), a pact that simplifies cross-border trade and fosters close economic ties. Two-way trade between the countries is booming, with significant exchanges of vehicles worth about \$80 billion, machinery worth about \$55 billion, and energy products worth about \$40 billion. The US imports Canadian mineral fuels and forestry products and also exports a significant amount of transportation equipment to the country (Logo Logistic, 2024). The US and Canada also reached an agreement to renew the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 2018. This agreement gives the US access to the Canadian dairy market and protects the country with its capital in Ottawa from possible US auto tariffs (Farras, 2018).

However, Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 US Election and his re-election as US president has an impact on Canada. Trump's election will certainly have implications for US monetary policy. Donald Trump is a president

who is known to uphold the America First policy during his first term. This policy refers to an approach to political and economic decisions that prioritize US national interests. This was evident when President Trump announced the imposition of import tariffs on products from Canada in February 2025, although its implementation was postponed. After a month's pause, President Trump finally announced the imposition of a 25 percent import tariff on Canada and Mexico which took effect on March 4, 2025 (Nugroho, 2025a). The US government will maintain the import tariffs until the situation called the national emergency over fentanyl drugs and illegal immigration ends (Puspapertiwi, 2025). Trump said there was no room left for Mexico or Canada to make a deal to avoid high trade taxes (Kurniawan, 2025).

Canadian Prime Minister (PM) Justin Trudeau said his government would respond with strong, decisive and proportionate action if tariffs were imposed. PM Trudeau ensured that his government would retaliate against Trump by imposing a 25 percent levy on US goods. The import tariffs will apply to everyday goods such as beer, wine and bourbon, as well as fruit, vegetables, consumer equipment, wood and plastic from the US. Not only that, the Canadian government is also considering taking additional steps such as withdrawing US liquor from local store shelves and immediately trying to diversify their trade relations. PM Trudeau stated that a 25 percent tariff would be immediately imposed on US goods worth 30 billion Canadian dollars or around Rp341.83 trillion. Meanwhile, the remainder, worth 125 billion Canadian dollars or Rp1,279.64 trillion, will take effect within 21 days if the US policy is not revoked (CNN Indonesia, 2025). PM Trudeau ensured that he was ready to wage a trade war and would continue to retaliate.

Not only the Canadian authorities, the people of this country also protested the US policy. Several cafes in Canada simultaneously changed their Americano coffee menu to Canadiano. Barista Magazine first reported that Kicking Horse Coffee, a roasting place and cafe in British Columbia, Canada, uploaded a call for action to change Americano on February 6, 2025. The symbolic renaming of Americano then spread to other coffee shops throughout Canada. (Winata, 2025).

The US decision to impose import tariffs on Canada and the Canadian government to take reciprocal action, aka reciprocity, is examined from the perspective of the concept of national interest, the concept of protectionism, and the concept of reciprocity. The US certainly has a national interest when implementing an import tariff policy on products from Canada, the US wants to protect its own country from products from Canada, and as a result Canada retaliates or reciprocates against the US.

**Literature Review.** First, a journal article written by M Khairil Akbar Setiawan et al. (2020) entitled *The Relationship between Identity Politics and Trade Protectionism under the Donald Trump Administration* discusses changes in US foreign policy in the economic sector under the Donald Trump administration since 2017. Trump brought a quite different political platform. Trump carried a discourse of populist Nationalism. The phenomenon of US trade protectionism is one reflection of the rise of Right-wing Populism that has emerged over the past 6 years. Trump's populism is articulated through the choice of protectionist trade policies. The Neoliberalism model is considered to bring greater benefits to foreign parties or domestic jobs are taken by immigrants or newcomers. Trump views that white citizens and US national interests are increasingly marginalized. He tried to bring up a nationalistic and exclusive trade policy (Setiawan et al., 2020). This study can be a reference because it writes about changes in US policy under the first Trump administration, namely populism through protectionism. The difference is that this journal article does not specifically discuss the America First policy through import tariffs on Canadian products under the Trump administration in his second term.

Second, a journal article written by Harun Umar et al. (2020) entitled *Canadian Beef Exports After the United States Country of Origin Labeling Policy 2009-2015* discusses the US protection policy against products from Canada, namely Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) (2011). On the basis of health and food safety, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) began to tighten trade in the agricultural sector by amending the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 and making several covered commodities one of the requirements for the entry of imported goods into the United States. COOL is a form of protection carried out by the US with the aim

of limiting the amount of imported beef from Canada entering the United States market because it has been contaminated by Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) or mad cow disease which is very dangerous to human health. This study can be a reference because it writes about the US protection policy against imported beef products from Canada (Umar & Evani, 2020). The difference is that this study only discusses the policy of protecting imported beef from Canada through COOL in 2011. This study also only discusses restrictions on the entry of imported beef commodities from Canada.

**Concept of National Interest.** National interest becomes a fundamental goal and the final determining factor that directs stakeholders of a country in making or formulating its foreign policy. Hans J. Morgenthau formulated national interest as first, protection of physical identity, in the sense of being able to maintain its territorial integrity, Second, protection of political identity, in the sense of being able to maintain its economic and political regime, Third, protection of its culture, in the sense of being able to maintain its linguistic and historical. The national interest of a country is the result of policy makers so that the national interests of a country can differ or even conflict with each other. National interest can be interpreted as something that is beneficial to the nation. Hans J. Morgenthau defines national interest as the minimum ability of a country to protect and maintain its physical, political, and cultural identity from interference from other countries. From this review, state leaders issue specific policies towards other countries that are cooperative or conflictual in nature. Morgenthau's approach is so popular that it has become a dominant paradigm in the study of international politics after World War II. Morgenthau stated that the national interest of every country is power, namely anything that can form and maintain a country's control over other countries. (Unikom, n.d.).

**Concept of Protectionism.** Protectionism is a form of government policy intended to help domestic producers to be able to compete with foreign producers in certain industries, which can be done by raising the price of foreign products, lowering costs for domestic producers, and limiting foreign producers' access to the domestic market (Abboushi, 2010:387). According to Seyidoglu (1996:112) in (Demir & Sepli, 2017:142) there are several reasons for a country to need to carry out protectionism in its foreign trade, including national defense, to increase trade (improvements in terms of trade), economic developments, increasing bargaining power in international trade (enhancement of external bargaining power), increasing the workforce, and several reasons that arise are as an effort to prevent dumping. This is what makes a strong argument that protection can be carried out by a country. Protection can be carried out by a country in the form of tariffs or non-tariffs (Anggun Setiyaningtyas & Haqqi Halifa, 2021).

**The Concept of Reciprocity.** International law has several principles, including the principle of equal rights, the principle of non-intervention, the principle of good neighborliness, the principle of mutual agreement, and the principle of reciprocity. The principle of reciprocity is important in international law, especially in relations between countries because every action of a country is a reflection of the country itself. This means that if a country does good to another country, then the other country will return the kindness, and vice versa, bad actions will be repaid with bad actions as well (Persada et al., 2021). The concept of reciprocity has long been recognized in international law and is one of the fundamental principles underlying various agreements and agreements between countries. This principle emphasizes the existence of balance and equality in relationships, where each party has comparable rights and obligations. In the context of international relations, reciprocity plays an important role in various aspects, including when a country imposes sanctions on another country, the sanctioned country may retaliate with similar actions as a form of negative reciprocity (Liputan 6, 2024).

## METHODS

The research method used in this paper is qualitative descriptive analytical. Qualitative research is a scientific activity to collect data systematically, sort it according to certain categories, describe and interpret data obtained from interviews or ordinary conversations, observations and documentation. The data can be in the form of words,

pictures, photos, meeting notes, memos, and so on (Muhammad et al., 2023). This study uses data collection techniques based on internet-based studies, digital books, previous research, journals and other relevant sources.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Canada One of the Largest Trading Partners of the US.** Canada is one of the largest exporters of its products to the US. Total exports to the United States from Canada were reported at US\$37.253 billion in December 2024. This record is up from the previous US\$36.191 billion for November 2024. The total export data to the United States of Canada is updated monthly, with an average of US\$23.364 billion from January 1988 to December 2024 with 444 observations. This data reached a high of US\$41.639 billion in June 2022 and a low of US\$6.715 billion in January 1988 (CEIC Data, n.d.). The data of Canadian exports to the US during 2024 can be seen in the graph below:



**Figure 1.** Total Exports to the United States Canada from 1988-01 to 2024-12

In terms of commodities, Canada is the largest energy exporter to the US. Canada is the second largest US energy exporter after Mexico. Energy is an important component of trade between Canada and the United States. According to the annual Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) data from the US Census Bureau, energy accounted for \$85 billion, or 27 percent, of the value of all US imports from Canada in 2019. Crude oil and petroleum products accounted for 91 percent of the value of US energy imports from Canada and 89 percent of the value of US energy exports to Canada. The United States exported \$23 billion worth of crude oil, petroleum products, natural gas, and electricity to Canada in 2019, about 8 percent of the value of all US exports to Canada and the second highest level on record since peaking in 2014 (US Energy Information Administration, 2020).

U.S. crude oil imports from Canada accounted for 56 percent of all crude oil imports into the United States in 2019, averaging 3.8 million barrels per day (bpd), up from 3.7 million bpd in 2018. In 2019, the United States exported 459,000 bpd of crude oil to Canada, which remains the largest destination for U.S. crude oil exports to Canada are typically light, sweet grades of oil destined for the eastern part of the country. U.S. crude oil imports from Canada tend to be large and sourced from the oil sands of Alberta (Western Canada), with the bulk of these exports going to refineries in the U.S. Midwest.

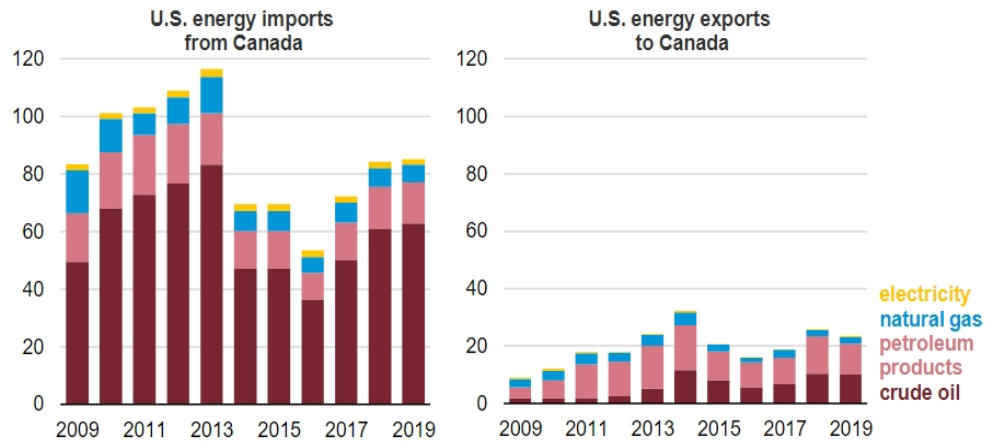


Crude oil trade by rail has become more attractive because Canada's pipeline capacity is sometimes insufficient to accommodate Canada's growing crude oil production. As a result, US imports of Canadian crude oil by rail more than tripled from an average of 91,000 barrels per day in 2016 to an average of 300,000 barrels per day in 2019. More than half of the 171,000 barrels per day of crude oil imported by rail went to the US Gulf Coast. Here is a detailed chart of US energy imports from Canada:

## Canada is the largest source of U.S. energy imports

**Value of selected energy trade between Canada and the United States (2009–2019)**  
billion dollars

eia

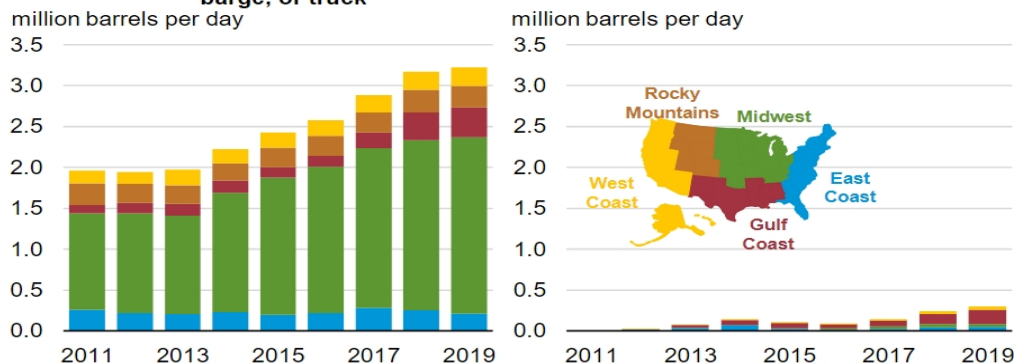


**Source:** U.S. Energy Information Administration, based on Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) data published by the U.S. Census Bureau  
**Note:** Data displayed are for crude oil, petroleum products, natural gas, and electricity only.

**Figure 2.** Canada is the Largest source of U.S. Energy Imports

**U.S. crude oil imports from Canada by mode of transportation (2011–2019)**  
shipments by pipeline, barge, or truck

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**Source:** U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Petroleum Supply Monthly* and *Natural Gas Monthly*

**Figure 3.** U.S. Crude Oil Import from Canada by Mode of Transportation (2011-2019)

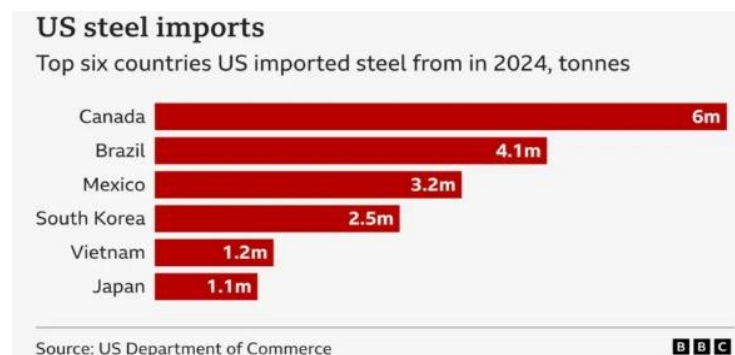
President Trump then issued a presidential memorandum titled “America First Trade Policy” on January 20, 2025, outlining immediate trade priorities for his administration. The memorandum directed federal agencies

and the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to evaluate key aspects of U.S. trade policy and to issue a report to the president no later than April 30, 2025. The memorandum covered three key areas: addressing unfair and unbalanced trade, economic and trade relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), and additional economic security concerns. The memorandum also indicated a timetable for the review of the USMCA. Additionally, on January 21, 2025, President Trump indicated his intention to impose a 10 percent tariff on China and a 25 percent tariff on Mexico and Canada no later than February 1, 2025 (Holland & Knight Alert, 2025).

**US Protection Efforts from Canadian Products with Import Tariffs.** The import tariff in question is a tax imposed on goods imported from other countries. The tax must be paid by the company bringing in the goods to the government. The company can choose to charge some or all of the tariff costs to customers. So far, the US has usually imposed lower tariffs than those imposed by other countries. This means that President Trump's policy could suddenly increase existing tariffs and the impact is that the price of goods in stores will also soar. Tariffs are a major part of Trump's economic plan. Trump explained that the implementation of tariffs would encourage the development of the US manufacturing industry and protect jobs, as well as increase tax revenues and grow the economy. It is recorded that goods from China, Mexico, and Canada contributed more than 40 percent of imports to the US in 2024 (BBC News Indonesia, 2025).

When the White House first announced the new tariff plans, President Trump said he was taking bold action to hold China, Mexico and Canada accountable for their promises to stop illegal immigration and stop the flow of toxic fentanyl and other drugs into the U.S. President Trump has already imposed a 25 percent tariff on goods from neighboring Canada and Mexico. The tariffs were originally scheduled to go into effect on Feb. 4, 2025, but will now go into effect on March 4, 2025. Meanwhile, Canadian energy imports will be subject to a 10 percent tariff. President Trump explained that the month-long delay in imposing the tariffs was because the U.S. wanted to see if an economic deal with Canada could be reached in that time.

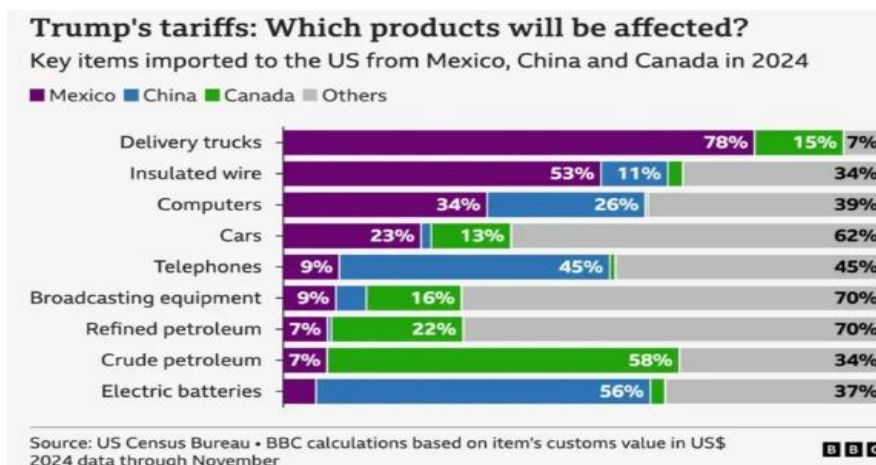
President Trump added that the 25 percent import tariff on imported steel and aluminum will be effective on March 12, 2025, with no exceptions. The US is the world's largest steel importer. Three countries, namely Canada, Brazil, and Mexico, are the three main suppliers of this commodity to the US. It is recorded that more than 50 percent of the aluminum imported by the US will come from Canada in 2024. US companies that use steel and aluminum as their production materials have warned that the tariffs could increase the price of their products. Here is a chart of the list of countries that provide steel exports to the US, the largest of which is from Canada:



**Figure 4.** US Steel Imports

In fact, President Trump had announced a 25 percent tariff on steel and 15 percent on aluminum in 2018, during his first term as US president. However, President Trump then negotiated exceptions for several countries

including Australia, Canada, and Mexico. Despite the exceptions, the US International Trade Commission noted that the tariff policy had triggered an increase in the average price of steel and aluminum in the US by 2.4 percent and 1.6 percent, respectively. The imposition of import tariffs in 2025 is feared to have an impact on commodity products imported from several countries including Canada. Here is the graph:



**Figure 5.** Trump's Tariffs: Which Products will be Affected

**Canada Retaliates.** Trudeau says his country is responsible for less than 1 percent of the fentanyl that enters the U.S., much of which comes from Mexico. Trudeau has criticized the U.S. tariffs, calling them “utterly stupid.” He has accused Trump of plotting the “total collapse” of Canada’s economy, saying the tariffs would make it easier for the U.S. to annex Canada. The Canadian government says the tariffs are “completely unjustified” and has vowed retaliation.

The Canadian government has finally imposed a 25 percent retaliatory tariff on imports of goods from the United States amounting to 155 billion Canadian dollars (around 107 billion US dollars) on Tuesday, March 5, 2025 if the Trump administration continues its tariff policy on Canadian products. PM Trudeau emphasized that this tariff will be implemented in two stages. The first wave includes goods worth C\$30 billion that will be subject to tariffs starting Tuesday, while the rest, worth 125 billion Canadian dollars will come into effect after a 21-day response or consultation period. The first wave of tariffs covers 1,256 products from various sectors, including orange juice, peanut butter, wine, alcoholic beverages, beer, coffee, household appliances, clothing, shoes, motorcycles, cosmetics, and pulp and paper products (Nugroho, 2025b).

The Canadian government is also opening a public consultation to determine the list of goods that will be subject to the second round of tariffs, including passenger cars and trucks, electric vehicles, steel and aluminum, agricultural products such as fruits and vegetables, aerospace products, and beef, pork and dairy products. In addition to import tariffs, Canada is also considering non-tariff retaliatory measures, including imposing export taxes on critical minerals that are used as raw materials for the U.S. technology and energy industries. Canada’s energy minister said that restrictions on exports of strategic minerals are one option being studied.

PM Trudeau also revealed Canada's plans to challenge US actions by filing a dispute resolution claim with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and through the USMCA which was previously renegotiated by Trump during his previous term (Simanjuntak, 2025).

Not only the central authorities, several Canadian provinces have begun to take similar action against US products. Ontario, which is the province with the largest economic contribution in Canada, will ban US companies

from participating in government procurement projects. Ontario Premier Doug Ford even announced the cancellation of a 100 million Canadian dollar contract with Starlink, a company owned by Elon Musk. Ontario also plans to impose a 25 percent surcharge on electricity exported to three US states, namely New York, Michigan, and Minnesota if US tariffs remain in place. The Ontario Liquor Control Board (LCBO) has also begun withdrawing US-made alcohol products from its stores (Arief, 2025). Another Canadian province, Nova Scotia, will double the toll rate for US vehicles crossing its territory.

The public and businesses in Canada also protested the US import tariff policy. Several cafes in Canada changed their Americano menu to Canadiano. William Oliveira, owner of Cafe Belem in Toronto serves Canadiano. He does not want his cafe to become a 'political place' but wants to show support for his country (CNN Indonesia, 2025a).

In addition to economic reciprocity, the Canadian government will also allocate 1.3 billion Canadian dollars (around Rp. 14.69 trillion) to strengthen border security. One of the steps taken is to increase the number of border personnel to 10,000, up from the 8,500 personnel on duty since December 2024. In addition, the US-Canada border will also be strengthened with the use of new helicopters and advanced surveillance technology that was not mentioned in detail. In addition to tightening border security, PM Trudeau also signed a new intelligence directive to deal with organized crime. This policy includes an additional budget allocation of 200 million Canadian dollars (around Rp. 2.26 billion), as well as the formation of a joint Canada-US task force tasked with curbing transnational drug trafficking and money laundering activities (Iswara, 2025).

Prime Minister Trudeau also approved classifying drug cartels as terrorist groups and appointing a special officer to oversee efforts to combat the spread of the opioid fentanyl.

## CONCLUSION

The US and Canada are located on the border, making these countries have diplomatic and economic relations. However, economic cooperation between Canada and the US has been strained after the US implemented a 25 percent import tariff policy from Canada which will be effective on March 4, 2025. Meanwhile, the import tariff for imported steel and aluminum of 25 percent will only be effective on March 12, 2025. This policy was made because President Trump promised to stop illegal immigration and stop the entry of toxic fentanyl and other drugs into the US. President Trump believes that the implementation of tariffs will encourage the development of the US manufacturing industry and protect jobs, as well as increase tax revenues and grow the economy. Moreover, goods from China, Mexico, and Canada account for more than 40 percent of imports to the US in 2024.

The Canadian government responded to the US policy by imposing a 25 percent tariff on imports of goods from the United States amounting to 155 billion Canadian dollars (about 107 billion US dollars) on March 5, 2025 and the implementation was divided into two waves. The Canadian government will challenge the US action by filing a dispute settlement claim with the WTO and through the USMCA. Several Canadian provinces have begun taking similar action against US products such as Ontario and Nova Scotia. Businesses such as cafes have also changed their menus from Americano to Canadiano in protest of US policy. Canada will also tighten its borders and form a task force to deal with drug trafficking.

**Suggestions.** The US and Canadian governments and stakeholders should open a dialogue forum and sit together to discuss the issue of import tariffs on Canadian products. It is hoped that this discussion will find a bright spot and make both parties not disadvantaged, for example by making a new bilateral agreement. If the consultation does not find a solution, international organizations such as the WTO or the USMCA that have been previously formed can be involved to get the best answer.

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