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**FROM 8¢**

**CANADA GETS RELIEF, FOR NOW: EXCUSED FROM U.S. TARIFFS FOR UNDETERMINED PERIOD**

Canada can breathe easier, for now: It's getting relief from U.S. tariffs for an undetermined period, as one of only two countries receiving a provisional exemption from the steel and aluminum penalties set to clobber the rest of the world.

U.S. President Donald Trump signed proclamations Thursday slapping tariffs of 25 per cent on steel and 10 per cent on aluminum, and they snap into effect for the rest of the world in 15 days.

After months of frantic lobbying, diplomatic arm-twisting, and heated debates within his own administration, Trump is signing the proclamations at the White House, surrounded by steelworkers.

"For now, Canada and Mexico will be excluded from the tariffs," said a senior White House official. "But it's not open-ended." He sidestepped the question of whether the threat of tariffs will be used to bully Canada and Mexico at the NAFTA bargaining table. Speaking on condition of anonymity in order to discuss matters before they became public, he said only that the reprieve remains in place for now, and that NAFTA is important to economic and national security.

That retains the semblance of a legal fig leaf for the administration. By law, the tariffs need to be described as a national security matter. A provision in a 1962 U.S. law allows the president to set emergency tariffs as a security issue. But the White House has repeat-

edly undermined its own legal case, including by intimating that the tariffs would be larded over Canada and Mexico as some kind of negotiating tool to extract NAFTA concessions.

The White House is now avoiding that kind of talk: "We will have ongoing discussions with Canada and Mexico," said the official. "NAFTA discussions will be part of that only because NAFTA is an important part of the security relationship within the hemisphere."

In a media briefing, he expressed frustration at the way the tariffs have been characterized, referring repeatedly to the "fake news," the lobbyists and the "swamp things" that he said exaggerated the ill effects while fighting the measures.

Two polls released this week say the tariffs are unpopular. But the same official said it truly is a matter of national security—with six U.S. aluminum smelters shutting down the last few years, and just five remaining, and only two operating at full capacity, he said that leaves the U.S. at risk of having to import all its aluminum eventually.

"(This tariff-signing) should be a great day for America," he said.

He also pushed back against reports casting the process as arbitrary, sloppy and rife for successful legal challenges. In one alleged example of haphazard policy-making, a report this week said the president raised the tariff rates for branding purposes, increasing them from the 24 and 7

per cent recommended by the Department of Commerce—because he wanted nice, round numbers.

The official insisted that was untrue. He said it was only upon careful calculation of import effects that the numbers landed at 25 per cent and 10 per cent. He did not explain how those round numbers managed to survive intact, even after the formula was later upended by the exclusion from tariffs of major suppliers.

Canada is the No. 1 seller of both steel and aluminum to the U.S.

The fact that Canada might be included on the initial hit list had become a political sore spot for the administration, as U.S. critics of the move ridiculed it by zeroing on the idea of national-security tariffs against a peaceful next-door neighbour and defence ally.

A full-court diplomatic press unfolded in recent days, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau calling Trump earlier this week, and then speaking Thursday with the Republican leaders of both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Canada's ambassador to Washington dined this week with U.S. national-security adviser H.R. McMaster; Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland, Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr, Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan, and Transport Minister Marc Garneau all reached out to cabinet counterparts in recent days.

The lobbying found a mostly receptive audience: the U.S.

military strongly resisted tariffs against allies, and 107 congressional Republicans released a letter this week to express their alarm over the move.

Expect a low-key response from Canada if Trump indeed intends to use temporary tariff relief as a bargaining threat. That means no talk of walking away from the table, nor any hint of making concessions under pressure.

"Our position hasn't and won't change," one Canadian source said Thursday. "We're after a good deal, not any deal. We'll take no deal rather than a bad one."

Shares of Ford Motor Co. and General Motors Co. fell after the U.S. Commerce Department recommended higher tariff on imported aluminium and steel. The possibility of these tariffs raising the prices of raw materials for vehicles has generated concern in the market bringing down the share performances.

Both companies reversed gains after Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross proposed a 24% global tariff on steel shipments into the U.S. and a 7.7% duty on aluminium imports.

The American Automotive Policy Council, a Washington-based trade group that represents GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV, forecasted earlier in 2017 that import restrictions would hurt the car industry and its workers.

Ford closed down 1.4 per cent while GM dropped 1.8 per cent in Friday trading. Fiat Chrysler's U.S. shares remained flat. Rise in prices of raw materials has already affected Ford's earnings and the company has forecasted that profit will further decline this year. GM has projected 2018 adjusted earnings per share will be in line with last year's result.

The automaker made a paradigm shift in policy by choosing to use the lighter-weight aluminium for the bodies of its lucrative F-Series pickups and biggest sport utility vehicles and it paid back successfully.

Data shows Ford sources 98 per cent of the aluminium and 95 per cent of the steel used for its domestic vehicle production from the U.S. producers. According to the company spokesperson Tom Henderson, GM uses American steel and aluminium for "a vast majority" of its production.

"While we don't have any specifics to share at this point, we look forward to working with the administration to develop policies that enable U.S. manufacturers to succeed in the U.S. and around the world," he added.

Unifor, the largest private sector union in Canada, vows to fight ratification of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

"There is nothing comprehensive or progressive about this agreement, it's TPP 2.0 with an emphasis on the zero," said Unifor National President Jerry Dias. "The government's haste to appear as free traders has led to the signing of a regressive agreement that will once again hurt Canadian workers."

Today in Chile representatives from the 11 pact nations, including Canada's Minister of International Trade François-Philippe Champagne, signed the agreement despite serious concerns raised by Canada's auto, forestry and dairy sectors, the inclusion of special investor rights to challenge public policies, and the absence of meaningful rights for workers, among others.

Among the key concerns is

that the new TPP rules will act as a disincentive to Japanese and other foreign automakers from investing in Canada. A side letter struck between Canada and Japan ensures that Canadian auto exports are treated no less favorably by Japan than other trading partners, yet Japan is among the most closed markets in the world for automobile imports.

"Japanese auto makers will be celebrating today and they'll be celebrating well into the future," said Dias. "It's astounding that Canada would set a precedent by signing a deal that negatively impacts major sectors, including auto, while simultaneously continuing to negotiate NAFTA."

In 2017, Canada exported about \$42 million in vehicles and parts to Japan, while Japan exported back more than \$6 billion.

On labour rights, the new TPP fails to make any meaningful advancement to ensure compliance and enforceability. The Labour Chapter is essentially unchanged from the initial agreement, with its terms derived from the U.S. original negotiating template. These terms have been tested in other global trade treaties and proven ineffective in addressing labour violations.

Unifor vows to fight the ratification of the CPTPP. In the coming weeks the union will mobilize workers across the country to aggressively oppose the agreement and will actively lobby MPs to vote against implementation.

Unifor is Canada's largest union in the private sector, representing 315,000 workers in every major area of the economy. The union advocates for all working people and their rights, fights for equality and social justice in Canada and abroad, and strives to create progressive change for a better future.

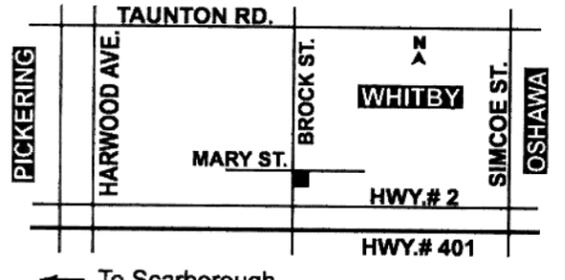


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