

An Introduction

Objective

The CARTA Initiative is the starting point for the burgeoning public, private and political interest in the potential of Canada entering the auto sector with a domestic position. It is considered by many experts to be an ingenious amalgam of academic expertise, political experience, industrial strategy and private sector inventiveness.

The rationale

1. The auto sector is the most important industrial sector in the world.
2. Canada does not have ownership in the sector, therefore we are completely exposed to extra-national decisions. This is strategically unsound.
3. The automobile is the most technologically advanced consumer product. Countries that drive the auto sector also lead the world in all manufacturing, engineering and research.
4. It is far more productive and logical to establish real roots here that will eventually grow into our own sector as opposed to minor automotive research currently conducted here for foreign companies.
5. A newly created auto sector in Canada would partner with foreign companies, but would be based here to serve Canadian interests first and not be subject to other countries demands and decisions.
6. A nationally-organized industrial goal to enter the sector will focus and develop Canadian talent here and will motivate young Canadians to stay in Canada.
7. There are minimum Canadian ownership guidelines in other critical strategic sectors. We must apply the same logic in the most spin-off rich sector on Earth.
8. As the only G8 country without an indigenous sector, Canada suffers a great deficit intellectually, industrially, economically and indeed nationalistically.
9. Just as it has done in every other country where it exists, an indigenous auto sector will create extraordinary unseen opportunities for growth.
10. It is natural for any country to move from assembler to creator.

Partners

National, provincial and local

CARTA is working at all levels of government to establish the means, the potential and the sources through which a indigenous Canadian car sector could be established, nurtured and grown.

CARTA is working with small and large private sector companies in Canada, it leads strategic research, it analyzes and evaluates other international models of the automotive sector.

CARTA is working with Canadian universities, politicians, government agencies and departments at the federal and provincial level.

Accomplishments

Public, private and practical

By raising the topic on a national level, CARTA has created a means by which this critical conversation can take place. By being non-partisan and resting between private and public, all interested parties can interact in a “safe” environment where all potentialities can be looked at.

In the last month alone, there have been front-page national newspaper articles, national CBC interviews, provincial news broadcasts, many radio talk shows interviews, provincial newspaper interviews and a tremendous ground swell of web-based reaction.

In accompaniment to this media and public reaction we have accomplished a great deal of work with the private sector. As an example, we are working with a billion dollar Canadian company to investigate its entry into the market. We are also working with two very well known extraordinary Canadian auto sector companies to partner their resources. CARTA is also in communication with international automotive manufacturers to seek their interest in partnering with Canadian companies.

These examples typify the type of connections that have taken place since the creation of CARTA.

At the request of CARTA, the University of Ottawa has agreed to host a national conference on the topic in the fall of 2009 with all significant parties invited to attend from across Canada. The former head of NSERC, Tom Brzustowski has agreed to take a lead role at the conference.

In the political realm, at the request of Michael Ignatieff, CARTA gave a detailed presentation at his office. The official report was also presented to the Liberal Caucus. CARTA has met with many MP's, the NRC, senior representatives of the National Centres of Excellence and Industry Minister (at the time) John Manley. There have been many meetings with senior economists, industry executives, the head of Auto21 and other leaders in the sector. The CARTA initiative is also included in the House of Commons official report on the auto sector.

The next step

Working with the federal government

CARTA has authored an entire branch of strategic research and now seeks support from the federal government of Canada to crystalize this effort into a publicly funded office of both research and resource to investigate the potential of a Canadian-based solution. This office would interact with, and be accessible to, all private companies, academic institutions, NGO's and provincial governments.

As the head of CARTA, Paterson was very recently contacted by the Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty's Chief of Staff, Rosemarie Graf. The topic of this conversation was to investigate CARTA's work on the topic. Currently talks are underway on securing Paterson as special advisor to the provincial government on the topic of developing a Canadian domestic position.

This role would see Paterson and a support staff investigate for the provincial government the potential interest in Ontario industry in the possibilities of building partnerships and alignments that could lead to a burgeoning of Canadian development in the auto industry.

Political aspects

Appearance and reality

Our ongoing work with federal and provincial MP's (including the official leader of the opposition) reinforce the fact that there are great political elements to the question.

It has been with a grudging acceptance that the Canadian taxpayers have agreed to the idea of supporting foreign companies here in Canada in return for the promise of jobs.

To many Canadians the delivery of financial assistance to Chrysler and GM has felt like equal parts extortion and bribery. The optics of this approach have been somewhat troublesome, placing the government in a difficult and compromised position, appearing like the Canadian taxpayer: out of control in a foreign based business.

In contrast, a federally supported and mandated research initiative into this exciting potential for Canada would accomplish a great deal that would resonate with voters.

It would:

- Highlight the federal governments vision and due diligence on the importance of the indigenous growth of Canada
- Demonstrate the Prime Minister's understanding of the power of a national industrial goal. (À la John Kennedy)
- Support the national economic stimulus plan with a bold industrial nationalistic stimulus plan that will act to unite Canadians
- Provide a unique bridge-building opportunity for French Canada (Bombardier) and English Canada (Magna) to partner on a great industrial and nationalistic goal
- Promote federalism not only in Quebec, but also in other provinces
- Prove to Canadians that the federal government has a vision for Canada that the leader of the opposition does not.