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Canada to host G8 and G20 in 2010

Sep 25, 2009 11:27 AM

MITCH POTTER
WASHINGTON BUREAU

PITTSBURGH – By Mitch Potter

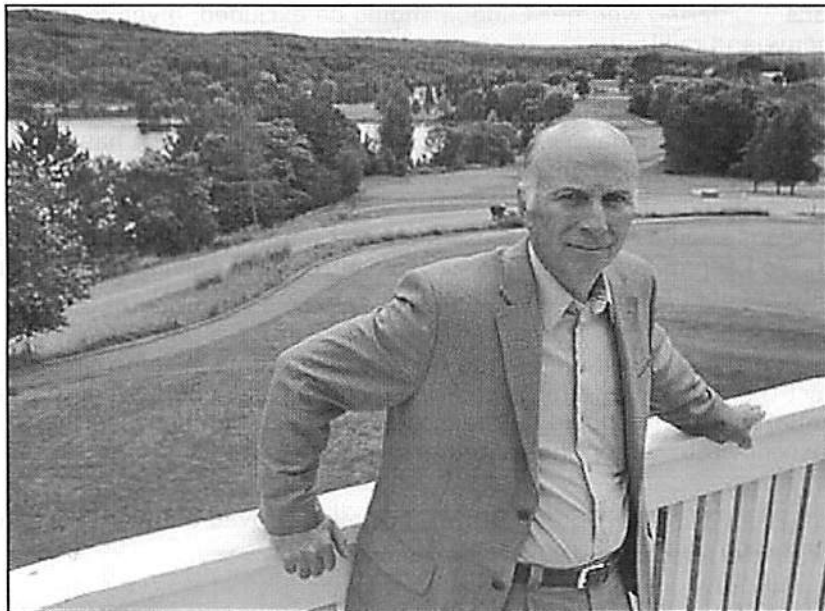
WASHINGTON BUREAU

PITTSBURGH — In a dramatic development that reflects the shifting nature of world power, Canada will host two major summits next year — one to say goodbye to the old G8 and another to codify the G20 as the premier forum for the global economy.

The addition of a G20 Summit to the Canadian calendar was confirmed this morning by Prime Minister Stephen Harper at a joint press conference with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak, who will co-host the gathering in what amounts to a symbolic handover. The two leaders confirmed also that Korea will host a subsequent G20 summit next November in Seoul.

The new G20 gathering is to ride on the shoulder of the G8, previously announced for Huntsville next June, in an arrangement sealed last night as the leaders of the world's 20 largest economies convened for a working dinner to open the Pittsburgh summit.

"This represents an unprecedented opportunity to show leadership. The G20 process has proven critical to our collective response to the global recession," said Harper. "Leadership as we continue to work on the economy, leadership on the way forward."



SARAH DEA PHOTOS/TORONTO STAR

Huntsville Mayor Claude Doughty, shown at Deerhurst Resort, says the positives far outweigh the negatives when it comes to playing host to the G8 leaders.

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Harper said the larger summit would take place "in proximity" to the gathering in Muskoka. An aide to the Prime Minister said later both forums would run back-to-back at the same Huntsville venue.

"We haven't yet worked out all the details ... but they will be distinctive summits," said Harper.

Harper insisted the G8 will have an afterlife, but the future role of the organization remains unclear and many political and economic analysts doubt whether it will have significant staying power.

The shift to elevate the G20 is a visceral sign of the times, one that rewards years of rapid growth of emerging economies like China and India with permanent seats in an enlarged world body.

"These meetings need to be relevant to the real world in which they operate," said former Canadian diplomat Paul Frazer, a Washington consultant. "I am hopeful that the G20, very much an idea initially worked on by Paul Martin when he was finance minister, will work hard to breathe new and creative life into an otherwise rather arid set of annual meetings."

Christopher Sands, a senior scholar at the Hudson Institute specializing in Canada-U.S. relations, said Canada's membership in the exclusive G-club has come in for periodic criticism, with other nations wondering whether Canada should be excluded, given the comparatively small Canadian economy and military.

"The fact that Canada has remained in these clubs is testament to the generosity of past American patronage and Canada's hard work within each forum, which has kept muttering about dropping Canada out from going anywhere," said Sands.

"Canadians should reflect on these facts and not see continued participation in global leadership as a given. To keep its place, Canada has to contribute to solving global problems, from Afghanistan to climate change. And that isn't cheap."

News that the G20 will eclipse the G8 was unwelcome in some circles. On Thursday, Italy urged against the move in a letter from Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi to Obama. "We stress that it is essential that there should be the closest co-ordination between the G8 and G20 presidencies," Berlusconi wrote, according to Reuters.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, however, proved a driver for change behind the scenes, sources in Pittsburgh told the Toronto Star.

The White House detailed reasons for the change in a communiqué late last night, saying: "Dramatic changes in the world economy have not always been reflected in the global architecture for economic co-operation.

"That all changed today. The G20 leaders reached a historic agreement to put the G20 at the centre of their efforts to work together to build a durable recovery while avoiding the financial fragility that led to the crisis."



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