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**HEADLINE:** Wilson to battle U.S. over passport entry requirement

**BYLINE:** Sheldon Alberts, The Ottawa Citizen

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WASHINGTON - \* A Bush administration plan to require Canadian visitors to carry passports or another form of secure identification before entering the United States is too costly and will be a hindrance to cross-border travel, says Canada's new ambassador to Washington.

Michael Wilson, who presented his diplomatic credentials to President George W. Bush yesterday, said he plans to mount a campaign to convince Congress and the White House to find a solution that "costs less," but still meets American concerns about security along the border.

"I think it is a significant issue. It certainly can have the effect of disrupting the flow of people between the two countries," Mr. Wilson told reporters in Washington.

Under requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, all travellers — Canadian and American — entering the U.S. by air starting Jan. 1, 2007, will need a passport or another form of secure travel document. By Jan. 1, 2008, the requirement will extend to all people crossing at land borders.

The plan was mandated by Congress as a response to concerns, raised in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, that current rules allowing cross-border travelers to present only a driver's licence or birth certificate presented a security risk.

While the U.S. has unveiled plans to allow U.S. citizens to carry a less expensive PASS card in lieu of a passport, no similar alternative has yet been developed for Canadian travellers.

The proposal stands to cost a Canadian family of four about \$250 if they intend to travel to the U.S. and don't have passports.

"Clearly, for both the United States and Canada, that poses an obstacle, an obstacle with some financial cost and time," said Mr. Wilson. "It is something that I see spending a good amount of my time talking to people in Congress as well as with the administration."

Mr. Wilson's concerns about the passport plan aside, the 68-year-old former Tory cabinet minister said there would be a "change of tone" in the Canada-U.S. relationship after often rancorous dealings between Mr. Bush and former prime minister Paul Martin.

"We are starting off on a new footing," Mr. Wilson said. "We are not going to be moving into a radically different relationship ... but I think the tone certainly will be a different one."

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