



## Trudeau talks new NAFTA with Mexico's president as Pelosi signals optimism on ratification

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**U.S. Speaker Nancy Pelosi says she's optimistic a modified version of agreement could come to a vote soon**





Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador spoke on the phone Thursday about progress on ratifying the new North American Free Trade Agreement. (Canadian Press)

**P**rime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke by phone Thursday with the leader of Mexico about the stalled ratification of the new North American trade pact, as the U.S. House Speaker sent positive signals that a revised agreement could be approved soon.

According to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador called to offer his congratulations to Trudeau on winning re-election.

The two discussed the progress being made to ratify the new North American Free Trade Agreement — known in Washington as the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA, and in Mexico as T-MEC.

The three countries inked the new deal in November 2018 after U.S. President Donald Trump demanded changes to the existing NAFTA.

"I spoke with Justin Trudeau, prime minister of Canada, to congratulate him on his re-election," López Obrador tweeted Thursday.

"We agree to maintain good relations and continue to convince U.S. congressmen about the importance of approving the T-MEC for the benefit of the three nations."

Ratification of the agreement slowed earlier this year when U.S. Democratic lawmakers demanded changes to the agreements' provisions on labour, environment and patent protections for prescription medications.

So far, Mexico ratified the agreement in its Senate earlier this year, while the federal Liberal government has long signalled its intent to follow the American lead.

## **Pelosi indicates optimism**

Amid the swirling chaos of impeachment proceedings on Capitol Hill, Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi sounded bullish about the chances Congress may soon vote to ratify a modified version of the trade pact.

Pelosi said congressional Democrats and the Trump administration are close to resolving their differences over the deal.

"If we can come to terms, (which) I think we're close to doing, this will be a template for future trade agreements – it will not only be good of itself, but a good pattern for how we can proceed," Pelosi said.



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., talks to reporters just before the House vote on a resolution to formalize the impeachment investigation of President Donald Trump, in Washington on Thursday. (J. Scott Applewhite/The Associated Press)

"We have an opportunity to do it right. We're not there yet, but we understand the road – the last, shall we say, mile that we have to go. I'm optimistic."

She made the remarks during a news conference in Washington after lawmakers in the House of Representatives voted 232-196 to approve ground rules for impeachment proceedings against the U.S. president.

## **Shadow of impeachment**

Some observers feared the impeachment controversy would swamp efforts by the White House and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to get the deal ratified – something Trump desperately wants to be able to trumpet during his 2020 re-election bid.

Recent media reports suggest Pelosi is keen to signal that Congress can still get things done even in the midst of something as disruptive as an impeachment.

The chairman of the U.S. House ways and means committee, Richard Neal, is to be in Ottawa next Wednesday, where he will meet Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland to discuss the new trade agreement and the ratification process in both Canada and the U.S. He is also scheduled to meet Trudeau.

