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SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM,
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3227

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The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

I applaud your commitment to renewing and solidifying our country's already strong relationship with Canada. As your Administration develops an action plan to fulfill the Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness, I urge you to give broad consideration to the potential impact that increased trade and improved access to Canada will have on the economic vitality of Buffalo and Western New York and other communities in the Great Lakes Region. I request your consideration, not only as a Member of Congress representing an area whose economic future is linked to increased economic activity with Canada, but also as a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Homeland Security Committee, and as a participant in the United States – Canada Interparliamentary Exchange.

Movement of People

The United States and Canada possess the longest border in the world, and that border has facilitated the peaceful movement of people for nearly two centuries. However, the enhanced homeland security concerns in a post-9/11 world have created new challenges to facilitating ease of access. And the additional costs imposed on Western New Yorkers in the form of more expensive documentation to cross the border have been limiting as well. I urge you to consider methods to make it simpler for Americans and Canadians to cross our shared border. The seamless integration of cross border travel – for purposes of commerce and personal use – will substantially benefit the economy of Western New York.

Movement of Goods

Canada is our largest trading partner, with total trade of \$525 billion in 2010. Easing the flow of movement of goods across the border and facilitating trade by land, sea, and air should be a high priority for both countries' economic future. This is particularly important as your Administration continues, rightfully, to increase manufacturing exports. Our top exports to Canada in 2010 – vehicles, machinery, electrical machinery, mineral fuel and oil, and plastics – all directly or indirectly relate to

manufacturing. Western New York would benefit substantially from any and all efforts that would make it easier and more efficient to move goods across the border. I urge you to consider proposals that would facilitate such an effort to increase the amount of cross-border trade.

Prioritization of Border Infrastructure

Our ability to increase the flow of people and goods across the border with the United States and Canada will hinge on the quality of border infrastructure. I strongly urge you to give high priority to strategic investments in bridges, ports, and highway infrastructure along the Northern Border in any action plan that is assembled with the Canadian government. I would specifically request that your Administration prioritize the Peace Bridge Capacity Expansion Project in Buffalo, New York. As the terminus between the New York State Thruway and the Queen Elizabeth Way in Ontario, the Peace Bridge, operating at a mere three lanes, is not adequate to meet the future economic potential.

I look forward to working with you and your Administration on this very important matter and learning from your staff of efforts to develop a comprehensive Action Plan with Canada. I believe that any successful Action Plan should specifically take into account the potential for an enhanced relationship with our Canadian neighbors to improve the local economies of communities across our northern border.

Sincerely,



BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress

Cc: Dan Restrepo, Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs