

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

July 6, 2007

Re: The need for immediate action on the Peace Bridge

Dear Business Leader:

The future of Buffalo-Niagara regional economy is highly dependent on predictable and efficient access to Southern Ontario, a market of more than 8.1 million people and the second fastest growing economy in North America. For our region to regain its full economic potential, efficient, predictable and on-time access to and from Canada must be vastly improved now.

The protracted environmental review process for the Peace Bridge is reaching a critical juncture. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has ceased negotiations with their Canadian counterparts and stated that barring some unforeseen changes, they are abandoning the plan for Shared Border Management, the notion that U.S. Customs and Immigration processes would be carried out in Fort Erie.

Uncertainty about the configuration of the plazas had delayed the submission of the Peace Bridge's Pre-Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to the Federal Highway Administration. Now, the necessary environmental document has been submitted to the federal agency. If the final reviews proceed smoothly, the project's Record of Decision (ROD) – the green light to proceed with land acquisition, final design and then actual construction – would be issued early next year.

Your participation is necessary.

In the coming months, the environmental review process will involve a period of public comment in which interested persons can attend meetings or otherwise submit comments about the plan to build a new bridge.

Some may argue that without Shared Border Management, there should be no project. Others may argue that we should wait for the next Presidential administration in the hopes that a new administration will allow the project to proceed with Shared Border Management in place—adding another multi-year delay to this long-stalled project. Neither of these positions are responsible or acceptable.

Attached please find a document which lays out the various arguments for immediate action toward getting the new bridge built. I encourage you to actively participate in the public comment period as it unfolds later this year. My office will distribute the meeting dates and addresses to which to submit written comments as they become available. Thank you very much for your assistance with this important matter.

Sincerely,



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress