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December 19, 2013

Thomas S. Winkowski
Acting Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Commissioner Winkowski:

In 2012, 4.75 million passenger vehicles and 1.26 million commercial vehicles crossed the Peace Bridge, making it the busiest northern border crossing for passenger vehicles and the third-busiest for commercial trucks in the country. Every year the bridge facilitates the transport of over \$30 billion in commerce across the Niagara River, spurring \$227.4 billion in economic activity, and supporting one million jobs.

The Western New York and Southern Ontario economies are inextricably linked. \$1.5 billion in traded goods and 300,000 individuals cross between Canada and Western New York every day. Canadians purchase approximately 20% of Buffalo Bills and 24% of Buffalo Sabres season tickets. 38% of airline passengers flying out of Buffalo Niagara International Airport are Canadian, and more than 3,000 Canadian students attend college in the Buffalo Niagara region.

Increasingly however, commercial and passenger vehicles are faced with intransigent delays at the Peace Bridge border crossing. In fact, the average wait time at the Peace Bridge nearly doubled from FY12 to FY13. These delays not only frustrate drivers, but threaten our region's economic dynamism.

CBP reports an average peak wait time of 26.4 minutes for cars and 29.4 minutes for trucks. However, the user experience often indicates a more exasperating experience. Drivers face hour long delays during peak hours, only to witness unmanned booths and closed lanes. The understaffing at the Peace Bridge discourages drivers, who, when confronted with exorbitant wait times, opt instead to turn around and go home.

CBP has stated that the agency faces several challenges in providing adequate staffing to meet mission requirements. In order to enhance the understanding of all of the parties who are concerned with this problem, toward the goal of resolving it, we write today to pose the

following specific question: Commissioner Winkowski, in your estimation, how many additional officers would CBP need at the Peace Bridge to cut wait times in half? We would also request background on the other three ports of entry in Western New York. These details include the average wait time, number of CPB officers staffing these bridges, and other related information.

We believe that until we adequately address the issue of staffing wait times will continue to increase. We look forward to working with you to reduce the delays at the Peace Bridge border crossing.

Sincerely,



BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress



CHRIS COLLINS
Member of Congress