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February 24, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

President Biden,

The United States and Canada have a long-standing relationship founded on shared values and strengthened by the spirit of cooperation. It is a welcome sign that the relationship between our two countries is back on track after a period of acrimony over the last four years, and in particular the last 12 months during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your recent bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau should be the beginning of an effort to restore this partnership. I applaud these efforts and that the Roadmap your Administration released included mention of finally “taking a coordinated approach based on science and public health criteria when considering measures to ease Canada-U.S. border restrictions in the future.”

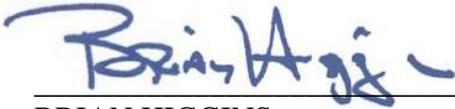
I believe that now is the time to think boldly and proactively in planning out the incremental re-opening of our border with Canada. Our nation’s vaccine distribution is increasing, testing capacity has grown, and with continued observance of social distancing precautions and good hygiene measures, we can crush the virus and manage the impact of any variants. The passage of the American Rescue Plan will embolden these efforts. Therefore, I challenge the administration to work with me to reach a goal for a partial re-opening of the Northern Border by Memorial Day of this year with a full re-opening by July 4 of this year. There are steps that the U.S. government can and should take on its own, immediately, to address some of the hardships caused by the closure of the Northern Border, including instituting a reunification program for families and loved ones at least as generous as the reunification program which Canada has already implemented.

Even though my district in Western New York sits just across the Niagara River to the Canadian province of Ontario, the distance to Canada is now further than it has ever been in my lifetime. This tears at the fabric of our community and is a critical problem for individuals, families, and businesses. Given the economic and social costs the border closure has had on the region, we must prioritize efforts to expand essential traveler exceptions and plan for an incremental re-opening now.

I am proud of collective action my community has put forth to take on the virus and tackle the challenges that have come our way. Yet our relationship with Canada requires special attention. We are ready to work with you to help achieve these objectives to reunite our communities once again.

Thank you again for your leadership. I look forward to continuing to work with you on this matter of utmost importance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

BRIAN HIGGINS
MEMBER OF CONGRESS