

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3226

February 26, 2018

Hon. John A. Sarcone, III
Regional Administrator
General Services Administration
One World Trade Center
55th Floor, Room 55W09
New York, NY 10007

Re: A new day for the U.S. Peace Bridge Plaza through new technology

Dear Administrator Sarcone:

Substantial progress has been made in the redevelopment of the Peace Bridge between Buffalo, New York and Fort Erie, Ontario in recent years, including the new \$50 million Canadian plaza completed in 2007, \$57 million in new improvements to the U.S. bridge approaches completed last year, the widening of the bridge landings on each side, and the \$80 million reconstruction of the main deck, which is currently underway. Despite this progress, the cramped and outdated U.S. plaza remains a disgrace and an embarrassment. Efforts to improve the U.S. plaza have been inhibited by the insurmountable conflicts between the legitimate operational requirements of U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the requirements of Canadian law and the Canadian Constitution inherent in previously proposed pre-clearance and pre-inspection regimes which aimed to shift CBP officers from the cramped U.S. plaza to the much-less-constrained Canadian plaza.

Today is a new day, however. U.S. Customs and Border Protection, together with the Public Bridge Authority, are advancing a series of initiatives which would use new technology to achieve all the benefits of previously proposed pre-clearance and pre-inspection schemes without running afoul of Canadian law of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These improvements, which together constitute phase two of the Pre-Arrival Readiness Evaluation (PARE) initiative, will not only clear the way for the long-stalled redevelopment of the U.S. plaza, they will make the Peace Bridge, already the busiest northern border crossing by some measures, the most secure of all northern border crossings, achieving the goal of 100% Non-Invasive Inspection (NII) for the first time.

CBP and PBA propose to shift existing and new electronic inspection equipment from the Buffalo Plaza to the Canadian plaza, while not shifting any CBP personnel to Fort Erie. The equipment to be deployed would include the devices which detect radioactive materials, equipment which scans vehicles for other contraband, and new facial-recognition cameras which will create comprehensive biometric logs, meeting one of the unfulfilled mandates set forth by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (the 9/11 Commission). Shifting this equipment to Canada will free up enough real estate on the U.S. side to eliminate the extant conflicts between cargo and passenger vehicle traffic, and

will allow CBP officers to devote their attention more fully to problem conveyances, and spend less time processing paperwork for legitimate commerce.

GSA will play a key role in the development of the new U.S. plaza made possible by phase two of the PARE initiative, and that is why we write to you today. GSA will be central to the environmental review for new U.S. plaza construction mandated by the National Environmental Policy Act as well as the reworking of the lease arrangements for the plaza on behalf of CBP. Given the importance of this project to the national security and the economic interests of the United States, we write today to request that GSA expedite its handling of the lease negotiations and environmental reviews associated with this project, while still meeting its obligations under the law. Put differently, given its importance, we request that the agency place this project on the "front burner," with attention from top staff who are empowered to make decisions and quick turn-around and resolution of issues as they will necessarily arise in an initiative of this scope and complexity. To that end, we invite you to visit the Peace Bridge with us in the near future to discuss GSA's role in the new U.S. plaza for the Peace Bridge. We are confident that GSA we will a real partner in the effort to push this project forward in order to advance the security and economic interests of the United States.

Thank you very much for your leadership and your service to the United States of America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Higgins". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "B" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Collins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chris Collins
Member of Congress