



August 5, 2016

Sent via e-mail: ralph.goodale@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Goodale:

Re: Niagara River Bridge Delays

As the Mayors who represent the communities along both sides of the Niagara River and the Chair of the Niagara Region, we must bring to your attention an economically damaging, unsafe and unacceptable situation that persists at the 4 border crossings between Canada and the United States in Niagara.

Niagara welcomes approximately 30 million American visitors each year in to Canada, many of them entering via one of Niagara's 4 bridges. For some time, it has been apparent that there has been an inadequate allocation of Canada Border Services Agency officers manning the points of entry into Canada at the Peace Bridge, Rainbow Bridge, Queenston-Lewiston Bridge and the Whirlpool Bridge. This has resulted in the back-up of vehicles and trucks attempting to cross the bridges into Canada for as much as one and a half hours during June, July and early August. On occasion, such delays have been experienced on busy weekends at other times during the year. This issue is of critical importance to address now with the hopes of attracting even more visitors from around the world in celebration of Canada's 150th Anniversary next year.

Sitting in this type of exasperating traffic on hot summer days discourages visitors from attempting to come to Canada, hampers the movement of goods in both directions, negatively affects commercial enterprises on both sides of the border, clogs local streets and major highways and degrades the environment. The evidence on all counts is clear.

The situation is intolerable. The local economies, the safety of our residents and workers at the bridge, commercial shipments and the proper management of our border crossings are all at the mercy of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). Comments by representatives of CBSA that it is meeting established standards to move traffic, that it adequately monitors traffic patterns, or that unavoidable traffic surges cause delays, are not reflective of the actual situations that are occurring. These comments do not respond to the concern that millions of dollars is potentially being lost in cross-border tourism and the manufacturing sector due to wait times. It is critical to note that the value of goods travelling through the Peace Bridge alone each year totals more than \$40 billion. Examples of too few lanes for clearing traffic at the various bridges abound. For those responsible for managing the bridges, the Buffalo-Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority and the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission, predicting traffic flows is fairly simple. This has been their business for decades. They have made repeated pleas for the allocation of additional CBSA resources at these major border crossings, without success.

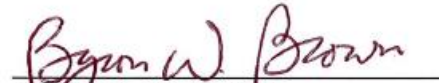
This is a matter of national importance. It affects the economy of both Canada and the United States. It affects the safety of Canadians and Americans alike. It affects Canada's relationship with its greatest friend and trading partner. It affects Canada's image.

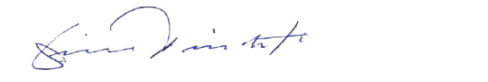
We implore you and the federal government to act immediately to allocate the necessary human resources to the international bridges along the Niagara River to ensure the safe and timely movement of people and goods across our border. This is a situation that can no longer be ignored and one that our communities should no longer be expected to endure.


We look forward to your positive and immediate response to our plea.


Respectfully,


Wayne H. Redekop, Mayor
Town of Fort Erie, Ontario



Byron Brown, Mayor
City of Buffalo, New York


Jim Diodati, Mayor
City of Niagara Falls, Ontario


Paul Dyster, Mayor
City of Niagara Falls – New York


Patrick Darte, Lord Mayor
Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario


Terry Collesano, Mayor
Village of Lewiston, New York


Alan Caslin, Chair
Regional Municipality of Niagara

Cc: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada (FAX: 613-941-6900)
The Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport (E-mail: marc.gameau@parl.gc.ca)
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