



INFORMATION BULLETIN

DATE: February 6, 2009

SUBJECT: Shared Border Management

SOURCE: BizJournals.com

Two upstate members of Congress have asked President Obama to restart shared-border management discussions with the Canadian government.

Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-Fairport, and Rep. John McHugh, R-Watertown, have written to Obama and requested he re-open shared border management talks with his Canadian counterpart when the newly-inaugurated president travels to Ottawa on Feb. 19.

The impact of shared-border management could be a major boost to the Buffalo Niagara region's economy and may push the construction of a second Peace Bridge span. Under the shared-border management guidelines, pre-customs clearance and other factors relating to goods and travelers entering the U.S. from Canada would take place on the Canadian side of the border, even though it would be run by U.S. Customs and border patrol agents.

The plan would be instituted at both the Peace Bridge that links Buffalo with Fort Erie and at the Thousand Island Bridge in Alexandria Bay.

"Canada and the United States have the largest bilateral trade relationship in the world," Slaughter said. "Key pillars in this relationship are the Peace Bridge and the Thousand Island Bridge."

A preliminary agreement was announced in late 2004 but was later reneged by the Bush administration, specifically by Michael Chertoff, who headed the **Department of Homeland Security** in the previous administration. Chertoff cited a demand by the U.S. that it could collect biometric fingerprints from those who decided, for whatever reason,

that they wanted to turn around on one of the bridges and not enter the United States. Canadian officials felt that was an unconstitutional demand.

Last September, Homeland Security issued a new report that noted five issues that stalled talks between the two countries, including arrest authority, finger printing and information shared between the two countries respective law and border enforcement agencies.

“We believe these issues are surmountable,” Slaughter said.

The Peace Bridge remains a key U.S.-Canada border crossing, handling 5.03 million passenger cars last year and 1.28 million trucks and commercial vehicles. The bridge routinely handles \$20 billion annually worth of trade between the two counties.

The **Ontario Chamber of Commerce** estimates border delays cost both the U.S. and Canadian economies more than \$13.6 billion annually.

Slaughter, who was in Buffalo earlier this week, said she hoped the Obama administration would look at shared-border management issues in a new light, especially with former New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton as the new secretary of state. Clinton was a strong advocate of shared-border management and frequently clashed with Chertoff over his reluctance to move forward with the plan.

“The economic ramifications of congestion and new customs rules can not be overstated,” Slaughter said.