

In Light of Canadian Gov't Decision to Close Consulate in Buffalo, WNY Delegation Strongly Urges Prime Minister Harper to Consider the Negative Effects of Eliminating Facility Pivotal to Cross-Border Relationship and Its Support of the Economy of Whole Border Region; WNY Delegation: Closure of the Consulate in Buffalo Would Mean Unnecessary Loss of Trade, Tourism & Border-Management Expertise

Buffalo, NY – Today, in light of news that the Canadian government will close its Consulate in Buffalo, the Western New York Congressional delegation wrote to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper strongly urging him to reverse course and consider the negative effects of this closure. The representatives noted that this decision will negatively impact Western New Yorkers, Canadians and businesses on both sides of the border.

Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) along with Representatives Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Brian Higgins (NY-27) and Kathy Hochul (NY-26) today called on the Canadian government to reconsider its planned closure of the Consulate in Buffalo, and specifically stressed the importance of the Consulate to cross-border trade, improvements being implemented by the recently signed Beyond the Border Action, and employment of Canadian and American citizens alike. They called the Consulate a symbol of our strong and enduring relationship between the two countries and the Western New York-Southern Ontario region, and stressed that its closure would have an unacceptable impact on the region.

"We respectfully request that you reconsider this decision, reflecting on the fact that it makes eminent economic and political sense – for both Americans and Canadians – for the Consulate to remain at HSBC Center in downtown Buffalo," the group wrote to Prime Minister Harper.

A copy of their letter is available below.

Buffalo has long been considered a gateway city to our friends in Canada. The lawmakers pointed out that roughly 30 percent of total Canada-US trade crosses in the Buffalo/Niagara Region, amounting to an estimated \$70 billion in trade annually.

"The Canadian Consulate in Buffalo is a linchpin to a successful economic relationship between

Western New York and Southern Ontario and serves as a critical resource for businesses across the region," said Senator Schumer. "In light of the news that the Consulate will close in Buffalo, we are urging the Canadian government to reverse from this troubling course and stick to the terms of the lease agreement to keep its operations and dozens of jobs in the HSBC building. The Canadian Consulate in Buffalo helps cement a critical cross-border partnership that bolsters the local economy and ensures that tourism and trade can function smoothly for both Americans and Canadians. What's more, as both countries move toward implementing the Beyond the Border Agreement, the Canadian Consulate in Buffalo is more important than ever, and I will continue to fight back against this decision and to keep this important resource available."

"The border between Buffalo and Canada is one of the most important for both of our local economies and it makes no sense to hamper our good relations by closing a diplomatic facility that helps foster commerce and tourism for both of our nations," said Senator Gillibrand.

"The relationship between Western New York and Canada is as strong as ever so the news that the Canadian government has chosen to close the Consulate that employs citizens from both our countries is a blow to the Buffalo/Niagara region and a decision we hope will be given another look by our friends in Ottawa," said Congresswoman Louise Slaughter. "I've long said that those of us in Western New York don't think of the bi-national Niagara region as two countries but as one community with a river running through it. Cross-border tourism and trade supports thousands of local jobs and pumps millions of dollars into our regional economy. We shouldn't do anything to jeopardize that relationship."

"Closing the Canadian Consulate in Buffalo would be a great loss to our region and to our partnership with Canada," said Congressman Brian Higgins. "The consulate is our local partner on many important bi-national issues, including travel and cross border trade, and provides numerous resources for Canadians, as well as Western New Yorkers. Having a Canadian government presence in Buffalo makes economic and political sense for our shared nations and I would strongly encourage the Canadian government to reconsider this decision."

"I am deeply concerned by the reports that the Government of Canada is closing the Consulate in Buffalo," said Representative Kathy Hochul. "It has served both the American and Canadian public with dedication for many years facilitating the free flow of commerce and trade in the region. I strongly urge Prime Minister Harper to give this decision careful consideration and keep open this bond of friendship between the Western New York and Canada."

Western New York Delegation's Letter to Prime Minister Harper

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

We write to express our disappointment with your government's decision to close the Canadian Consulate in Buffalo. We respectfully request that you reconsider this decision, reflecting on the fact that it makes eminent economic and political sense - for both Americans and Canadians - for the Consulate to remain at HSBC Center in downtown Buffalo.

The Canadian Consulate in Buffalo has long been Western New York's link to the Canadian government and a partner in many bi-national projects and initiatives at the federal, state, and local levels. The future of the economies of Western New York and Southern Ontario are firmly intertwined, so building relationships with our Canadian partners and working to remove regulatory barriers to cross-border trade will spur efforts to improve economic development in the region. The loss of this office in Buffalo will be sharply felt on all levels of government, along with the citizens who use its services and benefit from its location. The Consulate's presence is also representative of the strong and enduring relationship between the two countries along one of the world's longest peaceful borders.

The importance of the Consulate in the future cannot be understated. The Beyond the Border Action Plan, a signature document meant to renew and improve the strong relations between our two countries, demonstrates that importance. We have found that the Canadian Consulate in Buffalo to be an essential resource in effectuating those plans, not only as a liaison between your government and local political and economic stakeholders, but also a relevant resource. To materially reduce this resource now, when our countries are in the midst of making our relationship stronger, will be unfortunate.

Our shared border between Southern Ontario and Western New York contains one of the busiest international crossings in the world. Roughly 30% of total US-Canada trade crosses at our border crossings, amounting to an estimated \$70 billion in trade passing over the four highway bridges and two active railway bridges in the region. These border crossings are consistently ranked at the top of all US-Canada border crossings in total vehicle, bus and pedestrian traffic, and ranked number two in truck traffic. This does not even take into account the millions of annual tourists and regional shoppers that make up the over thirteen million

crossings over the highway bridges each year. Furthermore, thousands of Canadians cross over into Western New York on a daily basis for travel, commerce, health care, education, the arts, sporting events, and countless other reasons, supporting a necessary interest of your government.

Again, we forcefully urge you to reconsider your decision to close the Canadian Consulate in downtown Buffalo. It is important to the future of our communities and our continued strong bi-national relationship, both now and into the future.

Sincerely,

Senator Charles Schumer

Senator Kristen Gillibrand

Congresswoman Louise Slaughter

Congressman Brian Higgins

Congresswoman Kathy Hochul