

April 5, 2006- Slaughter Meets with Canadian Ambassador to Discuss WHTI and Pressing Border Issues

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Shared Border Management, Niagara Falls Airport Development Also Discussed

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-Fairport), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today met with Michael Wilson, Canada's Ambassador to the United States.

The meeting was largely a strategy session focused on the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, although a variety of other related topics were also discussed, including the issue of shared border management at the Peace Bridge, and the proposed transformation of the Niagara Falls Airport into an international cargo hub.

"Canada has an invaluable friend in Congresswoman Slaughter," Ambassador Wilson said following the meeting. "In responding to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, she not only understands the social and economic importance of our shared border, but she is vigilant in ensuring that the security requirements for using the border make for an efficient and safe flow of people and goods."

"Canada has been and remains a wonderful partner on border issues," Rep. Slaughter said. "Now, our two countries need to find workable solutions on WHTI. Ambassador Wilson understands the urgency of this problem, and the severe consequences for both nations if we don't solve it in the right way."

"Western New York is fortunate to have someone like Ambassador Wilson to work with," the Congresswoman added. "I look forward to working with the Canadian government to implement common-sense border solutions that will benefit both of our countries."

FURTHER BACKGROUND ON THE MEETING

Ambassador Wilson returned recently from last week's Cancun Summit, in which President Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and Mexican President Vicente Fox discussed border issues. Today, Ambassador Wilson was able to provide Congresswoman Slaughter with the Canadian governments' perspective and strategy on the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

During the meeting, Rep. Slaughter also asked the Ambassador to make shared border management at the Peace Bridge a top priority of Canada's government. In 2004, an agreement between the U.S. and Canadian governments was reached to move all customs work at the Peace Bridge to its Canadian side. Despite this, final agreements have remained stalled, and the bridge congestion the plan was supposed to resolve remains a major impediment to cross-bridge travel and trade.

Rep. Slaughter raised two other pressing regional issues with the Ambassador. They discussed the possibility of identifying emerging opportunities for a new ferry connection between Toronto and Rochester, in addition to the value of attracting Canadian business to the developing cargo hub at the Niagara Falls International Airport. Both projects are viewed as being critical to the economic security of the region.

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