

BUFFALO NIAGARA  
PARTNERSHIP

ANDREW J. RUDNICK,  
PRESIDENT & CEO

October 29, 2007

Hon. Hillary Clinton  
United States Senate  
726 Exchange Street, Suite 511  
Buffalo, NY 14210

Dear Senator Clinton:

On behalf of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership's 2,500 employer members, I thank you for amending the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriation bill in the Senate to delay implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) until July 2009. I now must urge you to make every effort possible to ensure that common/compatible language specifically addressing this delay is, in fact, included in the final appropriation bill (or other legislation) approved by Congress prior to the end of this session.

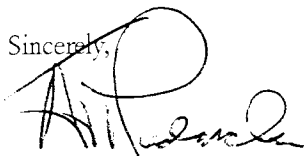
As you well know, a significant portion of Buffalo Niagara's economy is based on this region being a bi-national community. We are, therefore, extremely concerned about changes at CanAm border crossings, especially as they hinder the flow of goods and people. Of late, the strong Canadian dollar has made shopping in border regions like ours very attractive to Canadians. However, Buffalo Niagara's retail stores, airport and our cultural and sports venues have seen only marginal increases in Canadians; increases which are nowhere close to the dramatic influx of Canadian shoppers experienced the last time the two currencies achieved par. The most obvious explanation for this is the ongoing, widespread confusion regarding required identification, and the long delays at our border crossings.

DHS already has begun requiring additional identification from those entering the US, despite the fact that the final rules for WHTI implementation have not yet been promulgated. As you are aware, the federal government continues to be unable to demonstrate its ability to deliver a passport in a timely manner, let alone a suitable substitute. As a result, the DHS is encouraging states and Canadian Provinces to issue WHTI-compliant drivers licenses. However, it will be almost impossible for states and provinces to develop, issue, and distribute such licenses by the summer of 2008, which is the deadline in the DHS proposed draft rule.

New York State's announcement to issue a WHTI-compliant enhanced drivers license does not diminish the need for delaying WHTI implementation. If New York begins issuing such licenses in the summer of 2008 and DHS begins requiring passports or WHTI-compliant licenses in the summer of 2008, as is the agency's stated intent, it will be virtually impossible for a significant number of New Yorkers who cross the border regularly to obtain the license by the time it is required. At best, there would be chaos for some months.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to make finalizing the delay of WHTI implementation until June 2009 the top priority for the rest of this Congressional session. If there is time to implement WHTI "right," the Partnership believes that a viable, secure identification system can be implemented without increasing the economic distress of Upstate border regions such as ours. The federal government is nowhere near that point and will not be in the near future. So, plain and simple - what we need is time.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Rudnick