

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 15, 2007

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

I am writing today to ask that you immediately call for a bi-national summit with Canadian officials to resolve the outstanding issues related to shared border management negotiations. For consensus to be reached, these talks must occur on the highest levels of both governments and should include Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, and any other relevant agency heads, as well as their Canadian counterparts.

I fully share your Administration's commitment to enhancing security along the northern border, and I believe that shared border management will contribute to this goal. Two years into negotiations, the time for a final agreement is now. The people of New York and officials from both the United States and Canada have invested too much for us to abandon these efforts. With your leadership, Mr. President, and the leadership of Canadian Prime Minister Harper, I believe that over the course of a multi-day border summit we can have a resolution for shared border management. Summits of this sort helped us bring peace to Northern Ireland and the Balkans – my hope is that a similar effort will help us to revolutionize border management.

As you recall, in December of 2004, then-Secretary of DHS Tom Ridge and Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Anne McClellan agreed to establish a framework for land-pre clearance that would allow for the construction of new border facilities at the New York ports of entry at Buffalo-Ft. Erie and Alexandria Bay. In Buffalo-Ft. Erie, all primary and secondary border operations would occur on the Canadian side of border, while in Alexandria Bay they would be consolidated to the United States side.

These pilot facilities, run jointly by the United States and Canada, were intended to be models that would improve security for both nations, deepen trading partnerships and provide for expedited land passage for individual travelers. These goals are as important today, and as achievable, as they were at the time of your Administration's landmark announcement in 2004.

I have worked closely over the last several years with officials on both sides of the border to help forge an agreement on the issues involved in these negotiations. Unfortunately, talks have not always proceeded with alacrity.

In December of this year, when it appeared as though negotiations had reached an impasse, I began urging Secretary Chertoff and Minister Stockwell Day to become personally involved in these negotiations. Their involvement paid off. With guidance from the principal level, talks proceeded anew and resolutions were reached on several outstanding issues, including cooperative policing, information gathering and collecting and arrest procedures.

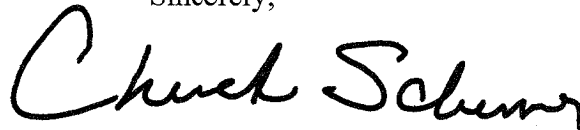
However, areas of disagreement remain. It is my understanding that both sides report they have not been able to reach a final agreement and negotiations have stalled.

Given the longstanding commitment to this effort on both sides of the border, I strongly believe that a resolution should be possible if there is a sufficient amount of will to succeed. The only hope for success is for all the relevant officials, including you and Canadian Prime Minister Harper, to work together and resolve these issues. Thus, I respectfully request that you convene a bi-national summit as soon as possible.

Establishing shared border management in New York will ensure that the most stringent security is brought to the northern border, while encouraging commerce and tourism. It will also provide a model for crossings all along our northern border. Furthermore, it is critical that the City of Buffalo receive some indication of the future of talks so they can proceed with the expansion of their border plaza and new signature Peace Bridge.

Considering how far these talks have come, we cannot turn back now. Under your leadership, Mr. President, I believe we can forge a final agreement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chuck Schumer". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator