



NEXUS
niagara



January 23, 2017

The Honorable John Kelly
Secretary of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honourable Ralph Goodale
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
House of Commons
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A6

Mr. Kevin McAleenan
Acting Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20229

Mr. John Ossowski
President of Canada Border Services Agency
Ottawa, ON K1A 0L8

Dear Sirs:

We write to you today in an effort to increase cross-border travel, trade and security through suggested reform of the bi-national trusted traveler NEXUS program. Since inception, membership has steadily risen to 1.4 million enrollees. In 2016 alone, usage increased at the Buffalo Niagara region's four international bridges to 1,600,000 conveyances, with program participants now accounting for roughly 17 percent of overall trips. Other security and facilitation benefits accrue at airports where NEXUS enrollment includes TSA-Pre and CATSA and Global Entry in the U.S.

However, there is more work to be done to enhance the effectiveness of the program and this year we want to take the success of NEXUS to the next level. With user satisfaction highest amongst NEXUS participants when processing times are the shortest, we believe that achieving consistently short wait times is a key to increasing NEXUS enrollment. Studies have shown that growing NEXUS penetration to a 50 percent share of motorists at our respective bridge crossings, would essentially eliminate border wait times and vehicle congestion. National security is enhanced as Customs officials would be dealing with more known travelers affording additional time to assess unknown individuals

With this goal in mind, the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority (PBA) and the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission (NFBC)—through our joint NEXUS Niagara marketing initiative—have developed a dual-pronged strategy to encourage greater program enrollment. The two tracks of this strategy are structural enrollment technology reform and widespread promotion. The PBA and NFBC will execute a wide-ranging series of tactics to heavily promote NEXUS in our region, and we respectfully request your assistance in implementing these key enrollment reforms and updates, including:

1. Extend the period that NEXUS cards are valid from 5 years to 10 years in order to match current passport validity. This will reduce the processing time and expense for re-enrollments and shorten the time frame for new sign-ups.

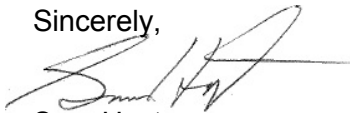
2. Modernize and simplify the GOES (Global Online Enrollment System) site. The current site is difficult to navigate and a source of great frustration for many potential enrollees (we frequently are contacted by potential members who voice this frustration).
3. Reduce the process time from initial application to interview. Currently this time period can often extend at least three-to-four months, which discourages enrolment.
4. As applications have been approved, allow either a CBP or a CBSA officer to conduct the physical (in-person) interview on behalf of both countries. This should speed up the process and reduce costs.
5. Ensure CBP and CBSA prioritize and continuously monitor NEXUS booth staffing to open additional NEXUS lanes when needed (It is a major disincentive when NEXUS queues are longer than regular lane queues, and NEXUS users often get out of a long NEXUS queues to move into regular processing lanes).

We believe these reforms—when combined with our increased efforts to market NEXUS—will attract new travellers to the program, leading to word-of-mouth buzz about the benefits of being a member. Recognizing that there is a diverse audience that can benefit from NEXUS enrollment, we plan to pursue several different avenues to expand the reach of our program marketing promotions in 2017.

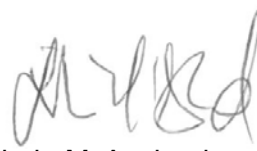
In closing, we would like to return your attention to the joint Canada-United States “Beyond the Border accord”, which aimed to achieve a shared vision for security and prosperity and included NEXUS as a key component in achieving this vision. The 2015 Implementation Report specifically details how growth in NEXUS enrollment across North America could eliminate existing border traffic backlogs and make transit and trade more efficient at our binational crossings. The report also goes on to list several steps to achieve greater NEXUS penetration, including “conducting enrollment blitzes, mobile enrollment events, extending hours of operation at enrollment centers, conducting joint interviews and expediting membership renewal processes.” The strategy outlined in this letter not only incorporates these steps, but also adds several more to advance our collective efforts to fully realize the NEXUS benefits.

We look forward to working with you to implement this strategy and welcome your input and insights into how we can successfully increase NEXUS enrollments in Western New York, Southern Ontario and beyond.

Sincerely,



Sam Hoyt
Chair, Board of Directors
Buffalo & Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority



Linda McAusland
Chair, Board of Commissioners
Niagara Falls Bridge Commission

cc: New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo
Province of Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne
U.S. Senator Charles Schumer (NY)
U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (NY)
Member of Parliament Rob Nicholson
Member of Parliament Vance Badawey
Member of Parliament Chris Bittle
U.S. Congressman Brian Higgins
U.S. Congressman Chris Collins