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May 28, 2009

Speaker Andy Dillion
Michigan House of Representatives
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop
Michigan Senate
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Speaker Dillion and Majority Leader Bishop:

The Detroit International Bridge Company has been active **in its criticism** of governments on both sides of the border for what it perceives as unfair treatment of its application to build a replacement span to the Ambassador Bridge. **In Canada**, the bridge company has alleged that its environmental assessment is being deliberately delayed and that the new, government-sponsored Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) will be costly and is not needed.

The Government of Canada would like to address these allegations.

The Ambassador Bridge Enhancement Project is separate and distinct from the DR IC project. As part of the DR IC environmental studies, **a twinning option** for the Ambassador Bridge was considered, and was dismissed because of significant negative impacts on the Windsor community, lack of system redundancy, and inadequate space for the border inspection plaza in Canada. The bridge company subsequently applied to replace its existing span. This replacement bridge would not dramatically increase the crossing capacity over the Detroit River and will require specific approvals from the Governments of Canada and the United States. **In Canada, the bridge company does not have any of the approvals necessary to proceed with construction.**

On December 5, 2007, the Canadian Transit Company (the owner **of the Ambassador Bridge on the Canadian side of the border**), submitted an Environmental Impact Statement to Transport Canada to construct a replacement span. Transport Canada's and the Windsor Port Authority's (the responsible authorities for this project under Canadian law) preliminary review of the Environmental Impact Statement identified that it did not

include any analysis concerning the potential environmental effects associated with modifications and/or expansion that may be required for the custom facilities at the Bridge. This is a requirement of the federal Environmental Assessment guidelines developed for this project pursuant to *Canada's Environmental Assessment Act* in consultation with the Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA). I would note that the Canadian Transit Company was provided with a draft of the guidelines in November 2006.

Accordingly, in January 2008, Transport Canada and the Windsor Port Authority informed the Canadian Transit Company that in the absence of this information, the federal review team was unable to commence the review of the Environmental Impact Statement tiled. Since then, Transport Canada and the Windsor Port Authority have, on several occasions, communicated to the bridge company that its environmental assessment is deficient and that until such time as it received the required information, they were unable to efficiently commence a review. **To date, Transport Canada and the Windsor Port Authority have never received the required additional information.**

As the information required to satisfy the federal environmental assessment guidelines for this project is contingent on the bridge company first developing a master plan for the Canadian Plaza, and as the bridge company has failed to properly developed such a plan in the last 18 months, the CBSA has taken an exceptional step to enable the bridge company to advance the environmental assessment of its bridge project. On May 14, 2009, CBSA notified the Canadian Transit Company that CBSA will hire an engineering consultant to develop a master plan for the Canadian plaza in order to enable the bridge company to advance the environment assessment of its bridge proposal. This is an extraordinary measure that has never been taken by CBSA or the Canadian Government.

In addition to the requisite approval of its environmental assessment, the Canadian Transit Company will require a number of regulatory approvals, including approval under the *International Bridges and Tunnels Act* and the *Navigable Water Protection Act*

In regards to the cost to taxpayers, through an innovative public-private partnership, the DRIC will be financed, built and operated by the private sector. At the same time, governments will retain ownership of the bridge and oversight to ensure that public policy objectives are met on both sides of the Detroit River.

Finally, the Detroit International Bridge Company has alleged that a new bridge across the Detroit River is unwarranted given the current decrease in traffic. The Government of Canada's traffic projections indicate that future trade and traffic volumes will continue to increase over the next 30 years. **The new bi-national bridge proposed by the governments of Canada, the United States, Michigan and Ontario is part of a long-term transportation strategy that will result in a modern, secure and efficient crossing, including a six-lane bridge, state-of-the-art inspection plazas, advanced security features, and direct freeway access in both Michigan and Ontario.**

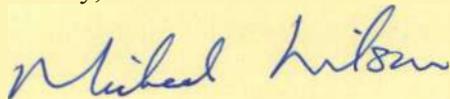
Of interest is that, while the bridge company argues that two crossings across the Detroit River could not both economically survive, it is pursuing a new crossing in the Niagara area, a region already served by four international bridges. Further, the Detroit-Windsor corridor is the busiest commercial border crossing in North America, currently handling almost 30 percent of the Canada-U.S. trade.

The Government of Canada has absolutely no interest in disadvantaging the Ambassador Bridge's long-term viability. **In fact, we believe that all the existing border crossings at Windsor-Detroit, including the Ambassador Bridge, will continue to be an integral part of this strategic corridor.**

Let me be clear - the Government of Canada is committed to completing the DR IC project as early as possible because it will mean economic growth, new jobs and prosperity for those not only in Windsor and Detroit, Ontario and Michigan, but for the whole of Canada and the United States. It is an economic imperative for both countries and only by working together can we turn the corner on the current global economic downturn.

The Government of Canada believes that the DRIC project provides the best approach to addressing our two countries' long-term, cross-border security, mobility and trade requirements while protecting local communities from significant negative impacts. We remain committed to working with our partners in the bi-national partnership to implement this critically important project.

Sincerely,



Michael Wilson
Ambassador

cc:

The Honorable Jennifer M. Granholin Jr.
The Honorable Pam Byrnes, Chair House Transportation Committee
The Honorable Jud Gilbert, Chair Senate Committee on Transportation
Kirk Steudle, Director of the Michigan Department of Transportation

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