

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3403

October 28, 2003

The Honorable Tom Ridge  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I have received a letter from Richard Quinn, Acting Assistant Commissioner in the Office of Congressional Affairs for the Customs and Border Protection Bureau of your Department. His letter was a response to a letter I wrote you on August 28.

Mr. Quinn's response to my letter totally misses my point. In my letter, I had asked that a decision to harmonize the operating hours of all the U.S. and Canadian ports-of-entry in North Dakota be suspended so that local input could be sought. In his response, Mr. Quinn did not even once mention the local input issue.

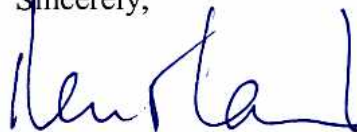
The North Dakota border communities I represent have very close relations with their neighboring communities in Canada. In fact, many times members of the same family live on opposite sides of the border, and it is routine for citizens to make cross-border visits to shop or for social reasons. I assumed that input would have been sought by your Department from affected citizens, businesses, and community leaders on decisions as significant as altering the hours at border ports-of-entry.

Apparently, however, this was not the case – neither prior to the decisions being first made nor subsequently, even when serious concerns were raised. For example, with respect to the two hour earlier border closing at the Estevan port-of-entry, a petition has been circulated that was signed by over 4,000 individuals.

First, I would like to know if any local input has ever been sought with regard to these changes at the ports. Second, if it is indeed true that there has been no local consultation, why does your Department see it is an appropriate way of doing business to not consult with those communities most immediately and extensively impacted by your decisions?

I appreciate your attention and await your response.

Sincerely,



KENT CONRAD  
United States Senate