



The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

October 11, 2004

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned organizations respectfully urge you to exercise your authority under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to re-open the U.S.-Canadian border to the beef trade. To do so would bring an end to the very real harm that thousands of Americans are suffering as a result of the border closing, and be consistent with your administration's record of supporting free trade.

As you are aware, the U.S. Department of Agriculture closed the border to the cattle trade citing public and animal health concerns, specifically the risk of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or "Mad Cow." However, since BSE is not a contagious disease, and imported Canadian cattle would be slaughtered by 30 months of age, there is no danger to the herd health of U.S. cattle. Further, the Canadian regulations for removing specified risk materials are identical to those of the United States, and therefore an open cattle trade poses no increased risk to public health. The USDA has since attempted to re-open the border, but a very small group of ranchers and an activist judge have stood in the way.

While the border remains closed, Americans pay the price. Just last month, 540 employees were laid off in Iowa after a beef-packing plant was forced to close. Canadian ranchers have retaliated for the border closure by closing their land to American hunters, and U.S. beef prices remain at record levels. The closure of the border also disrupts U.S. domestic commerce, as Alaska is unable to import replacement dairy cattle, *even from the lower 48 states*, as they are not allowed to bring them through Canada.

While some may believe that the border closure helps American beef producers, the opposite is true. American ranchers in the border states depend on shipping cattle to Canada to be “finished” for market, and then both those U.S. cattle and Canadian cattle are shipped to the U.S. for slaughter and packing.

If the U.S.-Canadian border remains closed to the cattle trade for much longer, Canada will begin to build its own packing plants, creating its own market and eliminating the need for U.S. plants even after the border is re-opened. Building a duplicative packing and shipping network in Canada would be expensive, and most Canadian ranchers seem to prefer the less costly alternative of shipping to American packers.

The United States can no longer afford the detrimental effects of a border closed to trade of an essential commodity, as a decision to keep the border closed for even a few more months could have a disastrous impact on American producers and consumers. The time to re-open the U.S.-Canadian border to the cattle trade is now.

Sincerely,



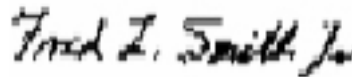
Grover Norquist
Americans for Tax Reform



David Keene
American Conservative Union



Paul Gessing
National Taxpayers Union



Fred Smith
Competitive Enterprise Institute