Canadian Embassy Ambassade du Canada

501 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington D.C., 20001

April 5, 2007

The Honourable Charles E. Grassley
The United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Grassley,

Thank you for your letter of March 22, 2007, enquiring about Canada's National Sex Offender Registry and about cooperation among Canadian and American law enforcement agencies.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is the agency responsible for the maintenance and management of the National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR) database, as per Section 14 of the Sexual Offender Information and Registration Act of 2004 (SOIRA). Although international partners do not have direct access to the database as noted in your letter, the RCMP will consider any request for assistance from the United States for any sexually-related offence mentioned in the Act, provided there are reasonable grounds to believe a Canadian is involved. Moreover, the Act expressly permits the RCMP to assist international partners, such as U.S. law enforcement agencies, who are investigating crimes of a sexual nature that have been committed against children, as identified in Section 7 (4.1) of the Criminal Code of Canada.

Please also note that, there is a system in place for U.S. authorities to access background information on Canadian sex offenders by means of the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database on persons with criminal histories, including sexually related offences. All U.S. law enforcement agencies, including U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at ports of entry, have access to this information through the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) computer system.

I should add that the RCMP has been consulting with the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, the Criminal Justice Information Services in West Virginia and with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children in Virginia on how best to work together on matters concerning the National Sex Offender Registry.

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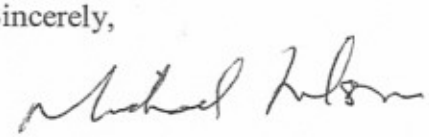
I believe that the aforementioned channels of communication directly address your concern that U.S. law enforcement agencies have sufficient access to information to identify persons who are criminally inadmissible to the United States. Therefore, I must take issue with the suggestion in your letter that the RCMP refuses to assist U.S. law enforcement agencies and that the level of cooperation among our respective law enforcement agencies is less than satisfactory. Quite the contrary is true.

Canadian law enforcement officials at both senior and operation levels assure me that there are very open lines of communication among their agencies and their U.S. counterparts. Bilateral cooperation is both routine and extensive. Permit me to provide two examples to illustrate this point. The Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETs), implemented at the end of 2001, constitute a multi-faceted law enforcement partnership between our two countries. These teams, which consist of members from the RCMP, Canada Border Services Agency, the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, together with other state and provincial enforcement agencies, conduct intelligence-led investigations and interdictions relating to national security threats, organized crime and other criminality along the Canada-U.S. border between ports of entry. With 23 teams located in 15 regions along our shared borders, the IBETs approach reinforces partnerships and encourages vital information sharing. Another means of ensuring and promoting cross-border security is the Canada-U.S. Cross Border Crime Forum. This bi-national effort brings together over one hundred senior law enforcement and government officials on an annual basis to facilitate the identification of shared law enforcement issues of interest and the development of initiatives and approaches to address common challenges.

I regret if the language on the RCMP website to which your letter refers was in any way misleading. In this connection, you may be interested to note that the website is currently being revised to clarify matters respecting international partners and the National Sex Offender Registry.

I have been encouraging senior Canadian security, policing and border officials to visit Capitol Hill on a regular basis to brief Members of Congress on the depth and breadth of bilateral cooperation across a host of related areas. I would be pleased to have these officials brief you and your staff at an early opportunity. In the meantime, I would, of course, be pleased to meet with you to discuss this and other issues of mutual concern.

Sincerely,



Michael Wilson
Ambassador