



Grand Rapids Area  
Chamber of Commerce

**Testimony to  
Senate Economic Development Committee  
From  
Rick Baker, President & CEO  
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce**

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me the time to offer our views regarding the New International Trade Crossing and Senate Bills 410 and 411.

The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce represents over 2,700 businesses throughout West Michigan. Our mission is to create opportunities for West Michigan business to connect, grow and succeed.

I'm here today on behalf of our members to express our support for the New International Trade Crossing, Senate Bills 410 and 411, and emphasize that the West Michigan business community strongly supports this project.

We support the New International Trade Crossing because it's about jobs. To be more specific it's about 109,000 jobs. 1 in 7 West Michigan jobs are directly linked to trade with Canada. What we are talking about are 109,000 people earning \$2.4 billion in wages, paying taxes and contributing to the economies of our communities. A well-functioning border is important to maintaining these jobs in our region.

As a peninsula state, it is particularly critical that we have a comprehensive infrastructure system in Michigan to support business growth that will result in job retention and creation. Construction of the New International Trade Crossing is a significant component of that system that will provide considerable value to Michigan companies. The trade crossing will create capacity and a freeway-to-freeway connection that will help eliminate the costly delays that cost Michigan businesses millions of dollars each year, while providing the ability to export goods at the speed to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

Through a governance agreement, the Canadian government has agreed to contribute \$550 million for the project and assume responsibility for construction cost over-runs. This is a win for Michigan and deal we should not turn our backs on. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose in building the NITC. The project will not cost Michigan taxpayers a dime.

*Connect. Grow.*  
**Succeed!**

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As if receiving a new trade crossing at no cost weren't enough, Governor Snyder successfully negotiated with the US Department of Transportation to leverage Canada's \$550 million investment to secure \$2.2 billion in immediate federal funds for other crucial components of Michigan's infrastructure system.

We have before us one of those crucial decisions that will dramatically impact Michigan's future. This is one of those tremendous economic development projects that will benefit Michigan, and our children, for decades to come.

The NITC is part of a broad development and economic vitality vision for Michigan. It will send a message that Michigan is open for business.

Building a new bridge to Canada is the right thing to do for the future of our state. We urge you to pass this legislation and support the retention of 109,000 jobs in West Michigan and the creation of countless others.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide our perspective.