

July 12, 2004

Dockets Management Branch
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane
Room 1061
Rockville, MD 208752

Subject: Docket Number 2002N-0278

This letter is being respectfully submitted on behalf of I.E.Canada, Canadian Association of Importers and Exporters Inc., a national, private, non-profit organization. The association was founded in 1932 to promote Canada's international trade and to provide services for its membership. The association has a membership base of over 650 corporations whose annual trade volumes are valued at over US\$196 billion.

I.E.Canada welcomes the opportunity to provide further comment on the interim rule for Prior Notice as published by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the *Federal Register* of April 14, 2004. As stated in our April 1, 2003 submission, I.E.Canada supports the FDA initiative of securing the food supply chain and ensuring that goods destined for the United States from Canada and other countries are safe from all tampering or other malicious, criminal or terrorist actions. As hundreds of thousands of Canadian and U.S. jobs depend upon the food and food related sector, there is a critical need to ensure that there continues to be a smooth and efficient movement of food and food related products across the Canada/U.S. border.

Since the time that the original FDA requirements were launched, considerable progress has been made in the harmonization of the prior notification reporting timeframes of the FDA and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). I.E.Canada requests that further steps be taken to ensure that there is true harmonization in this initiative and that the reporting timeframes of both the FDA and CBP are identical in both the FAST and non-FAST reporting environments. This harmonized approach would help eliminate confusion within industry and help avoid duplication and thereby further improve efficiencies at our shared border.

One other critical area that I.E.Canada feels should receive immediate attention is the area of FDA staffing at key border crossing points during peak periods, where food and food related products are being shipped into the U.S. During these peak periods, which are typically during the evening and weekend hours, there frequently is a lack of sufficient staffing for the identification of products for sampling purposes. This subsequently translates into significant disruptions and costs for the highly integrated food industry. We strongly urge that adequate resources be put into place to alleviate these problems and to allow timely and effective decisions to be made at our borders.

It is imperative that our shared border continues to operate efficiently while at the same time addressing the joint concerns of both our countries. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



John Bescec
Senior Vice President