April 15, 2020

The Honorable Donald Trump
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A OA

Su Excelencia Andrés Manuel López Obrador
Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos
Gate 8 National Palace, Plaza de la Constitución S / N
Colonia Centro, Mexico City, 06066

Dear President Trump, President López Obrador, and Prime Minister Trudeau:

On behalf of electronics manufacturers and suppliers who support more than 5.3 million jobs across North America and partner with every other critical industry, thank you for the necessary and dramatic steps that you and your governments are taking to combat COVID-19.

As part of your ongoing response, we urge you to launch a trilateral initiative to catalyze industrial base support for the continuing medical response and to spur the continent’s economic recovery in the months ahead.

The global spread of COVID-19 is a vivid reminder that pandemics know no boundaries. But neither does the spirit of partnership among the United States, Mexico, and Canada. This spirit of partnership has produced unprecedented economic growth across North America and the emergence of geographically integrated supply chains. These sophisticated supply chains have quadrupled North American trade over the last 25 years, and the recently signed U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement promises to fuel this growth further.

The electronics industry, I’m proud to report, has ramped up operations to meet surging demand for electronic components that go into ventilators, respirators, and heart and blood pressure monitors. Even as they prioritize healthcare-related manufacturing, they are also meeting customer requirements for other critical sectors, including national security and infrastructure. Yet, manufacturers tell us that conflicting restrictions, cross-border delays, and unclear demand signals are hindering production.

As the region responds to COVID-19, we ask that you leverage the interconnected North American electronics supply chain by coordinating, to the greatest degree possible, manufacturing and economic policies, including operational restrictions, incentives, and production goals. Such coordination is especially important for the electronics industry, which relies on cross-border flows of intermediate inputs. It is not unusual for electronic parts and systems to crisscross North American borders multiple times before final assembly is complete and delivery is made to customers within the region. Supply
Chain disruptions in one country are likely to impact COVID-19 response efforts and other critical sectors across all three countries. Compounding the risk is that it is impossible to completely disentangle manufacturing for critical sectors from that for non-critical sectors.

As we beat back this pandemic, leaders like you will increasingly focus on economic recovery and helping companies resume normal operations. However, we should aspire for more than a resumption of operations. COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of resilient manufacturing supply chains; so let us take this opportunity to bring renewed focus to building strong, resilient supply chains across North America by leveraging the strengths of each country. Together, our three countries can independently and collectively achieve our manufacturing potential.

We ask that all three governments launch a joint North American Manufacturing Initiative comprising senior government officials and private sector leaders who are focused on strengthening the region’s manufacturing competitiveness. This initiative would further trilateral cooperation in the following areas:

- Supply Chain Networking;
- Supply Chain Gaps;
- Skills Shortages;
- Cross-Border Trade Facilitation;
- Promotion of Innovation;
- Migration to Factories of the Future;
- Standards Development; and
- Infrastructure Needs.

By tackling these issues, we can build manufacturing to new heights across all three countries.

IPC is a global trade association with nearly 6,000 members worldwide, with 50 percent of them located in North America. We represent every facet of the electronics supply chain, including design, printed circuit board manufacturing, electronics assembly, and testing; and we support every other critical industry. About 80 percent of our members are small- and medium-sized companies. As such, our members are highly challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are enthusiastic about the North American region and eager to be part of the solution to current and future problems.

Sincerely

Dr. John W. Mitchell  
President & CEO  
IPC