As you will know, Scotland has a thriving trade relationship with the US. The US is Scotland's largest export market outwith the EU and most significant source of inward investment. The Scottish Government therefore welcomes the potential economic growth and jobs that will arise from a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) which makes it easier and cheaper to trade with the US, especially for small businesses.

However, we require cast-iron assurances that, whatever the approach to the provision of health services in the rest of the UK, TTIP will not affect the Scottish Government's ability to determine how NHS services are provided; that there will be no obligation to open the NHS in Scotland to private providers as is happening in England; and that decisions of the Scottish Government in respect of the NHS would not be open to potential challenge through ISDS mechanisms.

I note that both the UK Government and the European Commission have sought to give some assurances that the NHS would be unaffected by TTIP. Given the level of concern, and quite how vital the NHS is to the people of Scotland, could I ask that explicit protection for publicly-funded, publicly-run health services is put on the face of any agreement to give the maximum assurance possible. I note that the French Government have already been explicit in seeking that cultural services, such as film, are excluded from TTIP.
If the UK Government will not seek an explicit exemption as requested, would you please set out in detail how the policy decisions of the Scottish Government on the NHS in Scotland would be in no way be affected by TTIP, and what guarantees are either in place, or will be put in place, to ensure that this is the case.

I look forward to your response.

ALEX NEIL

cc John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth
cc Lord Livingston, UK Minister of State for Trade and Investment