

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 12, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
500 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20536

The Honorable Bill Blair
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency
Preparedness
House of Commons
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A6

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf and Minister Blair,

We are writing to you to request that the United States and Canada work together to develop nuanced and particularized guidance for reopening the northern border, the longest land border between two countries, recognizing the incidence of COVID-19 along the border is diverse. Recent reporting suggests that current travel restrictions will be extended through July and we are increasingly concerned about the impact a restricted border will have on our communities long term.

At the outset of the global pandemic, our governments determined that restricting non-essential travel across the border was necessary to protect public health. The urgency to limit the movement and interaction of individuals to stem the spread of the highly infectious coronavirus was well warranted. The restrictions necessarily decreased the volume of traffic at land ports of entry all along the border by only allowing travel for residents returning to their home country; individuals traveling to attend educational institutions, work, and for emergency or government response; lawful cross-border trade; and members of the Military.

In the United States, individual states have begun to implement their own reopening guidance that reflects the incidence of COVID-19 and other conditions unique to their communities. We have recognized that the experience of the pandemic is not monolithic and regionally there are very different challenges that communities face in an effort to return to normal economic activity. Border communities are especially vulnerable to the decision-making of national governments, neglecting the consideration of regional and local preferences or conditions. The economic and cultural impacts of sharing an international border are foundational to border communities. Although Canada has just recently allowed for extremely limited exceptions to the travel restrictions for spouses, dependent children, and parents of Canadian residents, people have been separated from their families and their properties for over 3 months. We appreciate that the incidence of COVID-19 at communities along the border varies and we respect the public health imperative; yet, a one-size-fits-all approach toward allowing travel across the border has the impact of keeping communities apart.

There must be bi-national coordination to develop a plan to safely allow for reasonable travel taking into account public health considerations but acknowledging our unique interconnected

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economies. The movement of people and goods across the border in a safe and responsible way will also require individuals to be disciplined in their own communities and abide by the safety precautions prescribed by their public health officials.

Sincerely,



REP. BRIAN HIGGINS
NORTHERN BORDER CAUCUS
CO-CHAIR



REP. ELISE STEFANIK
NORTHERN BORDER CAUCUS
CO-CHAIR