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August 2, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
US Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20016

Re: Need for Reciprocal Reopening Plan for the United States-Canadian Border

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

On August 9th the Canadian border will reopen to all fully vaccinated Americans for discretionary travel. This is welcome news. For over a year and a half, Americans living along the northern border have endured economic hardship as well as separation from their friends, families, and loved ones in Canada.

This action by the Government of Canada is welcome and recognizes the powerful force the COVID-19 vaccines play in protecting the citizens of both countries from disease. Months ago, Canadian officials made clear the target vaccination rate needed to reopen the border. Once that target was reached, they set a date for reopening and released very clear and explicit guidance on who may enter Canada. That announcement is a necessary step in reuniting the communities and businesses along the northern border who depend on travel and commerce between the United States and Canada for their livelihoods.

The increase in cross-border travel as a result of Canada's actions will increase the amount of cross-border travel at land ports of entry across the northern border. In the past, summer months have been plagued by delays, which has been a consistent source of frustration among my constituents.

- Given the lack of fee-based revenue due to the decrease in travel, does Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have the necessary funding to pay staff to prepare for an increase in travel at the northern border?

I am very disappointed to see that the United States government will not reciprocate. As a result, fully vaccinated Canadians will be refused entry to the United States at land ports of entry for the indefinite future. Month after month, this policy has been extended by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with no indication for when it will change and under what circumstances it may do so. This uncertainty is unacceptable. Western New York depends on our

economic relationship with Southern Ontario, and, in the event of a reopening, small businesses would require time to staff up, train said staff, and find suppliers. My community needs a plan and refuses to have their needs continually ignored by their government.

If the Government of Canada – representing a country with a population one-tenth of ours – can devise a plan to safely admit millions of fully vaccinated Americans to their country, then surely so can the United States of America. Such a plan must account for the host of operational issues which will surely arise:

- Does Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have sufficient manpower to staff our northern border to support a full re-opening?
- If the U.S. is to re-open the northern border, will CBP officers be required to administer COVID-19 testing on Canadian citizens?
- Will CBP officers have to inquire about the vaccine status of Canadian travelers, and then how would the agency verify and store that data?
- Will Customs and Border Protection (CBP) require additional documentation from Canadian citizens prior to their admittance to the United States?
- Will CBP officers require additional training prior to a reopening?
- Does DHS and CBP have sufficient funding to carry out such operations or do they require additional funding from Congress through the annual appropriations process?

It is essential that the United States reopens its land border with Canada – continual delay is unacceptable. To ensure this reopening happens without unnecessary delays requires addressing these obvious issues beforehand and publishing a plan with clear and obtainable objectives based on science and data. Such a plan requires the administration to be honest and direct with the American people and the members of Congress who represent them about when we can expect northern border operations to return to normal.

Thank you for your attention on this matter and I look forward to your detailed reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Higgins". The signature is stylized and includes a flourish at the end.

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress