



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

July 1, 2021

The Honorable Kirsten Hillman
Ambassador of Canada to the United States
Consulate General of Canada in New York
466 Lexington Ave., 20th floor
New York, NY 10017

Dear Ambassador Hillman,

On March 21, 2020, the U.S.-Canadian border was shuttered to nonessential travel in order to slow the spread of Covid-19 and to prevent travelers from carrying the virus across international perimeters.

More than 15 months later, the border remains closed to most residents of both nations, even after virus cases have plummeted on both sides of the border and as the rate of vaccinations has skyrocketed.

We write to you today to respectfully request that the government of Prime Minister Trudeau, as well as any Canadian elected officials within the boundaries of their office, effectively communicate a plan for reopening the U.S.-Canadian border.

For the past several months, residents within the cross-border community have expressed confusion and frustration not only toward the gratuitous extensions of the closure, but also notably toward the lack of communication and guidance from the government as to when the closure will come to an end.

The Canadian government has recently proposed that it has set a target to see 75 percent of Canadians fully vaccinated before reopening the border. Many elected officials believe this to be

an unreasonable and unfeasible objective, considering that as of this writing, that vaccination figure is closer to 20 percent.

Originally, Canadian officials indicated that the goal was to see 75 percent partially vaccinated and 20 percent fully vaccinated. That goal was reached and still the border restrictions were extended for another month.

There is still time to alleviate the enormous financial burdens carried by the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, by allowing these industries access to the economic opportunities presented by the summer tourism season.

A Wall Street Journal article published June 24 reported that at a recent virtual panel, an executive with the U.S. Travel Association estimated the American economy loses \$1.5 billion for each month that travel between the U.S. and Canada remains at a standstill.

Figures posted by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada noted that the Canadian tourism sector contributes approximately \$105 billion to Canadian GDP. Likewise, Vance Badawey, Member of Parliament representing Niagara Centre, has previously stated that nearly nine million U.S. jobs depend on bilateral trade while one in every six Canadian jobs depends on exports.

The Peace Bridge, within the 149th District of the New York State Assembly, is also an integral part of the U.S.-Canadian trade corridor, reaching over 44 percent of North America's annual income within a one-day's drive.

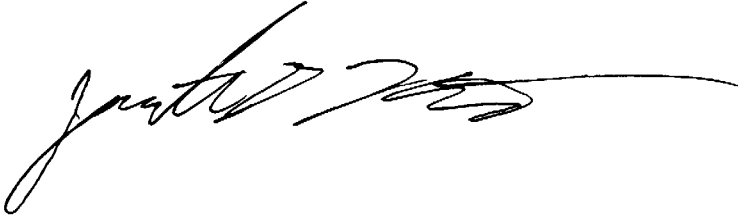
Even more important than the significant economic impact of a continued border closure is the toll taken on families who have endured 15 months without seeing loved ones who happen to live on opposite ends of the boundary. These families have rightly expressed outrage and indignation at the reopening process, and continuing to leave them in the dark without a stated plan or timeline on reuniting them is bordering on the inhumane.

In short, the border closure in March of last year was both necessary and justifiable to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. However, the necessity for such drastic measures has now expired.

Vaccinated New Yorkers now have the capability of traveling to Europe, but are not able to drive a few miles across the Peace Bridge in order to visit their families, properties and businesses.

We respectfully request that Canadian officials use the powers defined by their offices to end the border closure for good on July 21 and return our two great nations to a place of storied camaraderie.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan D. Rivera". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan D. Rivera
Member of Assembly, District 149