

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2021

Joseph R. Biden
President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write regarding current Department of Homeland Security (DHS) restrictions limiting non-essential travel from Canada to the United States at land ports of entry along the United States-Canada border. We appreciate the need to prioritize the health and safety of the American public through reasonable restrictions on international travel. However, we believe that fully vaccinated Canadians should be allowed to safely travel into the United States via land ports of entry. We urge you to lift these restrictions before October, provide a plan for reopening land ports of entry and appoint an interagency lead on U.S.-Canadian border restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Senators who represent states along the northern border, our communities have been deeply affected by the restrictions on travel. Many of our communities maintain close professional and personal ties with communities in Canada. Canadians come to our states to conduct business, enjoy recreational opportunities, buy goods, and visit friends and family. The restrictions on non-essential travel across the border have greatly curtailed these activities and led to economic and emotional strain in our communities. These limits on cross-border travel via land ports of entry are still in place even though, under existing DHS regulations, fully vaccinated Canadians can board an airplane and fly into the United States. We struggle to understand the public health rationale for the disparate treatment in modes of travel.

As you know, fully vaccinated Americans have been able to enter Canada via land ports of entry since August 9. This is true despite lower vaccination rates and higher per capita case rates in America. As of this writing, 84 percent of individuals 12 years and older in Canada have received at least one dose of the vaccine and the country is experiencing 10 cases per 100,000 people. Alternatively, 74 percent of individuals 12 years and older in the U.S. have received the vaccine and we are averaging 44 cases per 100,000 people. Given that Canada has opened its land border to fully vaccinated Americans, we feel that now is the time to open our land border to fully vaccinated Canadians.

We also urge you to provide a public plan for reopening travel to fully vaccinated Canadians at land ports of entry. Businesses in our states need to plan ahead, which includes an assessment of the impact of ongoing travel restrictions on their operations. A plan with some indication of when your administration would feel comfortable lifting border restrictions based on public health data would provide clarity to businesses and families along the northern border. It is also

necessary to ensure that DHS personnel at land ports of entry in our states are ready to reopen to fully vaccinated Canadians as soon as the restrictions are lifted.

Finally, we ask that you designate an interagency lead responsible for monitoring and eventually lifting non-essential travel restrictions. We understand that decisions relative to restrictions on travel at the border necessarily involve multiple federal agencies and executive branch personnel. We also appreciate the efforts of the administration's COVID-19 task force to process and evaluate the public health data and other information they receive from the various agencies. However, naming an interagency lead on non-essential travel restrictions would give this issue the attention it deserves and provide clarity to our offices and constituents. An interagency lead would facilitate discussions between the administration and our offices and ensure that we are able to effectively convey the concerns of our constituents as you evaluate the COVID-19 pandemic.

We know that vaccines work and provide the best opportunity to end this pandemic. We should recognize their efficacy and stop penalizing northern border communities by lifting the restrictions on non-essential travel for fully vaccinated Canadians. The COVID-19 pandemic has already taken a devastating economic and human toll on our country. Vaccines offer us the chance to mitigate and ultimately eliminate the spread of this virus. Allowing fully vaccinated Canadians to travel freely to our states and others would reflect the public health data which shows that vaccines work.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to continuing our work with you on this issue.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Angus S. King Jr.
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Gary Peters
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

CC: Jeff Zients, White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator