

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, D.C.

June 3, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

I am writing regarding the continued closure of the United States – Canada land border to non-essential travel and the hardships it has created for the border communities I proudly represent. Canada is one of our closest allies and our two nations share a deep economic and social bond, yet the continued inability to establish a bilateral plan to reopen the border undermines this special partnership. Our communities cannot afford any further delay or acquiescence – unilateral action to begin reopening the border appears necessary.

Since last June, I have repeatedly urged the Department of Homeland Security to coordinate with Canadian officials to develop a bilateral plan, guided by public health metrics, to reopen the border to non-essential travel and expand exemptions for families and property owners. After months of needless delay, I understand bilateral discussions are ongoing, but no formal plan has been established and no official timelines or goals have been set. Recent comments by Prime Minister Trudeau make clear that Canada is in no hurry to begin the reopening process and will make their reopening decisions without regard to U.S. interests.

A coordinated, bilateral approach to reopening the border remains preferable, but we should be under no illusion that the current restrictions are either fully synchronized or equitable for U.S. citizens. Canadians have been permitted to fly into the U.S. throughout the pandemic, while Americans remain unable to fly into Canada for non-essential travel. Canadians have been able to receive a vaccine when in the U.S., while fully vaccinated Americans are unable even to quarantine on their own properties in Canada, many of which have gone unattended for well over a year. Canada is more permissive in allowing family members to reunite, while the U.S. has not instituted a similar policy, inexplicably requiring families a short drive apart to board an airplane if they wish to reconnect. And American recreational boaters with no intention of docking, thus no risk of transmission, are being prevented from transiting through Canadian boundary waters, while Canadian boaters remain able to enter U.S. boundary waters.

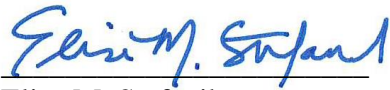
These inconsistencies defy both logic and public health knowledge, while causing prolonged economic and societal hardships for the individuals, families, and businesses in border communities. All the while, the U.S. continues to be among the worldwide leaders in vaccinations, with over 62% of adults having received at least one dose, and has shared over 1.5 million vaccines with Canada. One state along the northern border is vaccinating Canadian truck drivers and other essential workers entering the U.S. from Canada, while other states are currently developing similar plans in order to further support our northern neighbors and speed up the reopening process.

If a bilateral reopening plan cannot be established and publicly announced before the current restrictions expire on June 21, 2021, I urge you to unilaterally begin easing the restrictions for non-essential travel into the U.S. across the northern border. Immediate actions should include expanding the list of exempted travelers to include family members and extended family members; Canadians with property, boats, or leased campsites in the U.S.; and business representatives with business dealings in the U.S., while beginning a phased reopening to the broader public. Additional considerations could include allowing Canadians to cross the border to access U.S. airports to fly to U.S. or international destinations, given they may already fly into the U.S. from within Canada.

Initiating unilateral actions to reopen the northern border does not preclude the need to establish a bilateral plan to reopen the border, and in fact should add much-needed urgency to these discussions in order to secure reciprocal treatment for Americans seeking to enter Canada. Such actions appear necessary because further extensions of the existing travel restrictions without a clear plan forward is simply unacceptable for the communities along the northern border.

I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Elise M. Stefanik  
Member of Congress