

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 10, 2020

The Honorable Richard M. Mills Jr.
Acting United States Ambassador to Canada
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Acting Ambassador Mills,

We write regarding the border restrictions between the United States and Canada that began on March 21, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We must prioritize limiting the spread of COVID-19 on both sides of the border. However, many of our constituents, like those in Whatcom County, Washington, depend on the ability to travel daily across the border and face significant economic challenges while the border remains closed. We respectfully request that you work with the Canadian government to provide more transparency for our constituents regarding the process and timing of easing restrictions on our northern border, and work with Canada to consider a phased approach to lifting border restrictions, as conditions permit, to better enable border communities to plan. We also ask that you collaborate with the Canadian government to address the unique concerns of Point Roberts, Washington.

It is paramount that Canada and the United States work jointly to control the spread of COVID-19 and prioritize public health, as well as limit economic damage as a consequence of COVID-19 control measures. No country acting alone can meaningfully combat this global pandemic, nor the serious economic damage it is causing. It is therefore essential the United States and Canada work together effectively, seamlessly share information about public health needs, and collaboratively implement response measures.

While some border restrictions are a prudent protocol during this pandemic, we must stress that the economic impact these policies have on our border communities is particularly severe. In 2018, nearly seven million trips were made into Whatcom County by visitors from Canada. Approximately one-quarter of these visitors came specifically for the purpose of shopping and they spent an estimated \$138 million in local stores and businesses, according to a recent report by the Border Policy Research Institute at Western Washington University. With the prolonged border closure, crossings from Canada into Whatcom County are down to a mere two percent of their 2018 numbers and cross-border shopping travel is nonexistent.

Relatedly, we would like to highlight the uniquely challenging circumstances faced by residents in Point Roberts, Washington. As you know, due to its unique geography, Point Roberts residents must cross the Boundary Bay Border Crossing and the Peace Arch Border Crossing to

access the rest of Whatcom County and the mainland United States. Currently, the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) prevents non-essential travel of American citizens between Point Roberts and the mainland, which isolates that community from the rest of Washington and the country. It is possible for U.S. citizens to travel safely between the mainland and Point Roberts since they can enter Canada by car and re-enter the United States without stopping or getting out of their car. Individuals with drivers' licenses from Point Roberts or who can prove ownership or lease in Point Roberts could be identified and allowed to transit between their town and the rest of Washington state. We urge you to raise this issue with the Canadian government and work to find a solution that protects public health and ensures Point Roberts' residents can access the rest of the United States.

Thank you for your timely attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Patty Murray
U.S. Senator



Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senator

cc: The Honorable Michael Pompeo, U.S. Secretary of State