

Canada/US border communities request elimination of PCR requirement

This week, in a virtual press conference, four border city mayors – three Canadian and one American – along with New York District 26 Congressman Brian Higgins, and two voices of border businesses – celebrated the US opening of the land border. At the same time, the group called on the Canadian federal government to drop the "unnecessary" PCR test requirement for fully vaccinated Americans crossing the land border into Canada. It's believed that the requirement targets Canadians and Americans that can least afford to travel.

The border closure order was originally enacted 20 months ago and border communities, border residents and border businesses have paid the greatest price. With the border re-opening, border community leaders spoke passionately about the need to return to normal and eliminate the requirement. All of the speakers were united in the message that the closure of the land border and the high-cost of testing will continue to act as a barrier to recovery.

The following are a number of key comments from the event:

Congressman Brian Higgins, NY-26

"[It's a known fact that the vaccine is highly effective in keeping people from getting and giving COVID. Requiring a test is a redundant and costly requirement for those fully vaccinated and it presents an unnecessary obstacle to returning a pre-pandemic flow of people across the border, which benefits the economies of both nations]."

Mayor Jim Diodati, Niagara Falls, ON

"In Niagara Falls, we are like one city divided by international border. With vaccination rates among the highest in the world, it's time to allow our families, friends and visitors, who are fully vaccinated the ease of safe travel that we once enjoyed."

Mayor Robert Restaino, Niagara Falls, NY

"While everyone wants travelers to be safe and be mindful of public health standards, if our push for vaccination, on both sides of the border, means anything, then let's respect and incentivize those who have responded to the call to be vaccinated and simplify the land border crossing to showing your full vaccine status."

Mayor Michael Bradley, Sarnia, ON

"Eliminating the testing to return to Canada by Canadians is a matter of fairness and doesn't endanger public health in Canada according to experts. The Federal Government needs to do the right thing on the road back to recovery and normalcy and eliminate the testing."

Mayor Drew Dilkens, Windsor, ON

"Windsor and Detroit have tightly connected supply chains on the business side, as the Automotive capital of Canada. There are literally hundreds of thousands of Canadian and American jobs that rely on smooth and efficient access to either country to help keep our economies rolling. The tightly-knit nature of our business supply chains also means that close family relationships are built on both sides of the border. Families that have been separated for 20 months during all major life events – events of celebration and events of mourning. Now there is a pathway to cross the land border, but that pathway is limited by an unreasonable and costly requirement for a PCR test to return to Canada."

Susie Grynol, President and CEO, Hotel Association of Canada

“I hear it every day from my members: this PCR test is blocking travel. Whether you are trying to visit family, or planning your Christmas holiday, or travelling for business, or a global account looking to book an international event, many are taking a pass on Canada because the process is too complicated and expensive.”