

FDFA calls on Canada and US governments to never restrict border again



May 11, 2023 marks the first day non-essential travelers will be accepted into the United States without proof of a COVID-19 vaccine, returning the Canada/USA border to a normal pre-pandemic state.

The [Frontier Duty Free Association](#) (FDFA), representing the small independently-owned, land border duty free businesses, is calling on governments on both sides of the border to never restrict the border again and calling on the ministerial regional representatives to be pro-active voices for the border communities and their businesses in a post-pandemic environment.

As the association notes, over the last three years the U.S. and Canadian governments closed the border, changed border policies, and only began to remove restrictions in a very slow and disjointed way. Canada ultimately lifted its vaccine requirement on October 1, 2022, while the United States continued to require proof of COVID vaccination for Canadians crossing the border into the U.S. The land border closure happened while air travelers flew easily by air between the two countries.

“While we are thrilled to see this final restriction at the border lifted, the impacts of the land border closure and restrictions are deep and long-lasting on border communities and business like ours,” said Barbara Barrett, Executive Director, FDFA. “We urge both governments to never let this happen again and to take measures to protect our precious border and the ability for our border communities to thrive. It was wrong that the land border was treated differently than air travel.”

Border communities and border businesses have been disproportionately affected by the border closure and subsequent restrictions. While life returned to normal everywhere else, government regulations prevented border communities from resuming their way of life and economic base. Restrictions at the border stalled recovery for businesses at the border like the land border duty free stores that depend solely on the flow of traffic over the Canada/US border.

FDFA recently released a study showing a sales decrease still at an average 42% decline compared to pre-pandemic. These export stores were shuttered for nearly two years and were down over 95% in sales during the full closure of the land border for 20 months.

“We did our part to keep Canadians and Americans safe at the land border,” said Tania Lee, President, FDFA. “Now, we need action to ensure our businesses can thrive again and assurance that we will never endure such a border closure and restrictions again.”