



STATE OF WASHINGTON
— OFFICE OF GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE —

July 16, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C 20037

Dear Secretary Blinken:

In light of important recent developments, I am writing to urge the Biden administration to reopen the U.S.-Canada land border for non-essential travel at the earliest practicable date, consistent with applicable public health guidance. This is an urgent matter for border communities in Washington State. I know that as a result of my previous communications, conversations you have had with Members of Congress and communities on both sides of the border, you are aware of the unique hardships this closure has imposed on our residents, as well as those along the entirety of the U.S.-Canada land border.

On July 9, 2021, I visited Point Roberts, Washington. This community is uniquely situated given its location below the 49th Parallel. Residents must transit through Canada to reach other parts of Washington State by land. Having visited the community, conversed with residents, and met with businesses, I have seen firsthand the toll the border closure continues to have upon Washingtonians living there.

Point Roberts and British Columbia have a long-intertwined history. But because of the continued border closure to non-essential travel, businesses in Point Roberts are at risk of closing, houses in the community are neglected, and residents are experiencing isolation. I recently allocated \$100,000 in emergency funding to the only grocery store in Point Roberts to ensure that residents have access to food and necessary supplies, but I know the thing that will best help Washingtonians in this community and other border communities in the state is to reopen the border so they can again thrive.

Based on public reports¹, it is my understanding that the Canadian government may be considering imminently reopening their border to vaccinated American travelers. Additional

¹ [Prime Minister Justin Trudeau holds 33rd call with premiers on COVID-19 response | Prime Minister of Canada \(pm.gc.ca\)](https://www.primeminister.gc.ca/prime-minister-justin-trudeau-holds-33rd-call-with-premiers-on-covid-19-response)

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information and work are needed to implement this policy, but this is an important step forward, and I encourage your Department to work with the Canadian government to ensure it comes to pass. I also urge the U.S. government to consider immediate steps to at least partially re-open the land border, as well as to recognize the unique hardships that the Point Roberts community is experiencing, by implementing an exemption that reflects their geographic needs. Of course, achieving a general reopening as soon as possible should be pursued as our shared and ultimate goal.

Throughout the pandemic, Washington State has taken a science-based approach and has prioritized public health and safety in our response. Because of rising vaccination rates and the vigilant collective efforts of Washingtonians across the state, Washington was able to fully reopen its economy. The prolonged border closure, however, is needlessly extending the serious economic and social hardships of the pandemic for Washington State border communities.

More than 70 percent of people in Washington State age 16 and older have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This is a tremendous milestone and it is my understanding that British Columbia has experienced a similar level of success in protecting residents from the virus. Because of the success of vaccination programs on both sides of the border, I firmly believe that the time has come to reopen the U.S.-Canada border at least partially, that it is safe to do so, and that doing so will benefit communities in both countries.

Thank you for recognizing the urgency of action in this case. If you or your staff have any questions, please direct them to my Deputy Director of Federal and Interstate Affairs, Geoff Potter, at (360) 867.8690 or Geoff.Potter@gov.wa.gov and my Director of International Relations and Protocol, Schuyler Hoss, at (360) 239.1317 or Schuyler.Hoss@gov.wa.gov.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Inslee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "I".

Jay Inslee
Governor