



July 8, 2022

Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary
Brian Hyer, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Chris Magnus, Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20229

Re: Restoration of hours at ports of entry on U.S.-Canada border

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Commissioner Magnus:

The impact of limited access at the North Dakota-Canada border continues to create hardship for North Dakotans and Canadians alike. While the ports of entry at Pembina, Dunseith and Portal are operating at full capacity, we renew our request to restore full operational hours at all ports of entry in North Dakota.

On April 1, 2022, the U.S. federal government rescinded the need for fully vaccinated travelers into the U.S. to be tested. This change in requirements saw a 40% increase in persons entering the U.S. through North Dakota ports of entry. However, the current number of persons is still 50% less than pre-pandemic levels. The eight North Dakota counties that border Canada border have a total labor force of 17,551 people and 1,841 businesses across 19 different industries. Many of these North Dakota individuals and businesses rely heavily on their Canadian counterparts for multiple reasons in their daily lives, and limited hours at the majority of North Dakota's border crossings have made these critical interactions much more difficult. While the small expansion of hours after COVID-19 at North Dakota's ports of entry has been a welcome development, it is imperative that hours of operation return to their pre-pandemic status immediately before further damage is done to the economies and well-being of our border communities.

As of May 2022, 184,671 personal vehicle and bus passengers had entered North Dakota since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is only 15% of the volume seen

in the prior 25 months (1.16 million from April 2018 to March 2020). Furthermore, the estimated lost Canadian visitor spending in North Dakota due to the COVID-19 pandemic is over \$283 million. Spending by these Canadian visitors constitutes nearly 10% of North Dakota's annual visitor spending, and the importance of these international dollars to our economy cannot be overstated.

The Westhope port of entry currently operates every day from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. As U.S. Highway 83's sole Canadian port of entry, Westhope is the primary port for the city of Minot (pop. 48,377), which lies only 65 miles away. In 2018, the Westhope port saw 7,939 personal vehicles pass through, that's an average of 662 personal vehicles per month. As of April 2022, only 528 had passed through. Our monthly average from 2018 has become our quarterly average.

The other two port options for transit to and from Minot, the ports at Antler and Sherwood, have maintained operating hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and have experienced similar declines in traffic. Antler saw 7,502 personal vehicles in 2018 and has seen only 812 personal vehicles through April of 2022. Sherwood experienced 15,266 personal vehicles in 2018 and has seen only 1,096 through April. It is clear that these reduced hours have had a significant impact on traffic at these ports in addition to the impacts of COVID-19 health measures put in place at various times in the last few years. North Dakotans and Canadians in these areas are forced to cope with hours that do not accommodate the average person's daily routine. A North Dakotan's day does not begin at 9 a.m. nor end at 5 p.m. Such limitations are unacceptable and cause significant hardship for people who wish to cross the border beyond these limited hours.

Bottineau hosts the state's oldest county fair annually, only 17 miles from the Carbury port of entry. June 2022 marked the first time in two years that Canadian residents were able to attend due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In past years, Canadians have comprised a large percentage of attendees at the Bottineau County Fair, and their patronage was sorely missed in the two years the fair operated alongside a closed border.¹ After the partial reopening of the border, the Carbury port, Bottineau's primary port of entry, has been severely limited in its hours of operation, and the limitations have had a profound effect on the port's traffic. In 2018, the Carbury port of entry saw 11,877 personal vehicles pass through. In 2022, through April, only 589 personal vehicles utilized the Carbury port, putting the year's total on track for only 2,400 personal vehicles. To make the most of the summer visiting season and restore this number to its pre-COVID level, it is imperative that the federal government restore the Carbury port of entry hours of operation to its former standard. The current hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. are not conducive

¹ Grace Kraemer, "Bottineau County Fair returns for 133rd year" [Bottineau County Fair returns for 133rd year](https://www.kfyrtv.com/news/bottineau-county-fair-returns-for-133rd-year) (kfyrtv.com)

to the needs of the people of Bottineau and their Canadian neighbors, and it is clear that events such as the Bottineau County Fair suffer greatly without Canadian participation.

We strongly urge CBP to restore pre-COVID-19 hours at all of North Dakota's ports of entry. The undue hardship caused by limited hours of operation at our ports could be solved simply and effectively by reverting to pre-pandemic norms. We are fully prepared to aid CBP in achieving this goal for the benefit of North Dakotans and Canadians impacted by this crisis.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Doug Burgum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Doug Burgum
Governor