
NEWS RELEASE

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Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat

B.C. URGES U.S. TO ACCEPT ENHANCED DRIVER'S LICENCE

VICTORIA – The B.C. government made recommendations yesterday to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI). Among the six recommendations made, B.C. continues to strongly urge the U.S. to accept the enhanced driver's licence as a practical, secure and convenient alternative to proposed passport requirements for land and sea entry.

“We share common safety concerns with our U.S. neighbours and are committed to helping strengthen border security through cooperative law enforcement and intelligence,” said Minister of State for Intergovernmental Relations John van Dongen. “But we also share common travel, trade and tourism interests and have a responsibility to balance increased security without significant impairment to cross-border travel.”

B.C. is committed to working closely with the Canadian and U.S. governments towards launching the enhanced driver's licence by January 2008. Trade between the borders is estimated at \$1.2 billion U.S. a day and supports 5.2 million jobs.

The enhanced driver's licence and other recommendations made yesterday would help alleviate border crossing congestion (wait times between B.C. and Washington have been as long as three hours at peak crossing times), provide consumer certainty with scheduled timelines for phased-in implementation, expedite border clearance for low-risk, pre-approved travellers, provide exemptions for children and ensure ease of access for Americans wishing to attend and benefit from the 2010 Olympic and Paralympics Games in Vancouver.

B.C. and Washington State partnered in June 2006 to help promote the enhanced driver's licence, an initiative also backed by the Pacific North West Economic Region (PNWER), the Council of Tourism Associations of B.C. (COTA), and the Business for Economic Security, Trade and Tourism Coalition of the US & Canada (BESTT). In March 2007, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security signed a memorandum of understanding with Washington State on their enhanced driver's licence initiative; however, the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking has not yet accepted enhanced driver's licences from Canada as a possible alternative to the passport requirement.

For more information or to view the B.C. government's submission, visit the Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat online at: www.gov.bc.ca/igrs/index.html.

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