

May 19, 2021

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Health  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario,  
K1A 0A6

Hon. Bill Blair, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness  
Minister of Health  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario,  
K1A 0A6

**RE: Manufacturers Need a Border Reopening Plan**

Dear Ministers Hajdu and Blair,

This week, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME), along with twelve of Canada's leading national business associations, wrote to the Prime Minister to request that the government develop a clear and consistent pan-Canadian approach to reopening businesses. While CME fully supports this call, the top priority for Canada's 90,000 manufacturers is for the federal government to develop a Canadian border reopening plan. I therefore write to you both to urgently request the development of a border reopening plan and to offer our association's help to achieve that end.

As Canada's COVID-19 vaccination campaign continues to grow, and as we continue to hit key vaccination milestones, we are on the cusp of being able to reverse travel and border restrictions for essential workers that have been in place since the start of the pandemic. Any unnecessary delay on relaxing border measures, particularly for business travel, will do irreparable harm to Canada's economy and put our industry at a competitive disadvantage.

Business thrives on certainty and predictability. Throughout the pandemic, manufacturers have had to contend with a business climate that has been very uncertain and very unpredictable. While industry clearly supports the need for stringent public health protocols, we must have a plan to unwind these policies once our workforce is vaccinated.

Border closures, and policies surrounding the border, have been a challenge for our sector since they were introduced. Over the past year, manufacturers dramatically reduced global travel and went to great lengths to ensure the health and safety of international workers here in Canada. But, our industry's workforce is global and relies heavily on the free flow of workers across the Canadian border. While we could bring in key workers from abroad throughout the past year to perform essential repairs and

maintenance, that movement was not smooth, often unfairly restricted, and most recently made more difficult and restrictive. Moreover, Canadian manufacturing workers have not enjoyed the same freedom of movement as their American counterparts into Canada and this has had negative implications for Canadian manufacturers who conduct business abroad.

For all these reasons, it is urgent that we have a plan to reverse these border policies and that the government communicate its plan as soon as possible. CME believes that the government's border reopening plan should include the following elements:

1. Provide clear public health milestones (both in terms of vaccination rates and case counts) that must be attained in order for border restrictions to be eased.
2. Clearly define the metrics that will be used to measure these public health milestones.
3. Prioritize the repealing of restrictions on essential business travel before leisure travel.
4. Gradually expand essential business travel categories to encompass all types of business travel.

We believe that a plan founded on these principles will act as an incentive for Canadians to get vaccinated and provide much-needed certainty for business. It will stimulate economic activity by improving domestic business conditions and show manufacturers that the light at the end of the tunnel is indeed getting brighter.

Manufacturers stand ready to assist the government achieve an orderly re-opening of the economy and of the Canadian border for business travel. The sooner we can do this, the better it will be for all the Canadians that rely on a thriving Canadian manufacturing sector.

I have asked my staff to reach out and coordinate a meeting with your offices on this matter. We look forward to your favourable reply.

Sincerely,



Dennis A. Darby, P.Eng., ICD.D  
President & CEO  
Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters

CC:

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry  
Hon. Mary Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade