

BORDER COLLABORATION INITIATIVE

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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MCA and CBSA Announce Domestic Lane Pilot Project to Improve the Traveller Experience at the Cornwall Port of Entry

Cornwall, Ontario - As part of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA) and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) Border Collaboration Initiative (BCI), the Domestic Lane Pilot Project will be launched on November 3, 2020, and will run for a minimum of six months. By designating a lane specifically for domestic travel, the pilot project aims to create a smoother border crossing experience for all travellers at the CBSA Cornwall Port of Entry (POE), resulting in faster processing and shorter wait times for all.

“Domestic Travel” is defined as travellers who have not been to the United States. It includes those who are travelling directly from Kawehno:ke (Cornwall Island), such as residents, and any traveller who has travelled to Kawehno:ke (Cornwall Island) directly from Cornwall, such as visitors, business people, teachers, service vehicles, etc. Domestic travel can include both Akwesasne residents and non-residents.

“International Travel” is defined as travellers who have been to the United States or transited through the United States (such as from the districts of Kana:takon (St. Regis) and Tsi Snaihne (Snye)). International travel can include both Akwesasne residents and non-residents.

International travel will be processed through the main lanes at the port of entry. All traffic, domestic and international, is expected to benefit from shorter wait times and reduced congestion overall at the POE.

Signage will clearly indicate which lanes are for international travel, and which lane is for domestic travel only. Travellers are encouraged to use the appropriate lane for their travel, as using the domestic lane incorrectly when travel is from the United States may delay processing of the vehicle and create additional delays for the other travellers.

The Domestic Lane will operate from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week, and will be located in LANE 4 at

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the CBSA POE plaza in Cornwall for the period of the pilot project, which is a minimum of six months. CBSA is committed to ensuring the lane is operational for the duration of the project.

The domestic lane pilot adheres to all current COVID-19 related travel restrictions, and facilitates the border experience for Akwesasne community members and for the CBSA. The CBSA remains committed to ensuring that Indigenous peoples continue to be able to move within and between their communities, and are able to provide and access essential goods and services.

The project will be reviewed at the end of the six-month period to determine if it will be modified or implemented permanently.

The Border Collaboration Initiative is a collaborative effort by the CBSA and MCA to improve the border crossing experience at the Cornwall POE. The need for a dedicated domestic lane for travellers was first discussed during 2018 Design Thinking sessions between CBSA and other Government of Canada departments, and Akwesasne leadership and community. Since September 2019, a joint Working Circle including MCA Chiefs, staff and CBSA representatives have been working to define the domestic lane's purpose and parameters.

"The domestic lane pilot is a great example of the ongoing collaboration between the MCA and the CBSA. It will facilitate travel and improve the border crossing experience at the CBSA Cornwall Port of Entry, especially for local residents needing to cross on a regular basis, whether that's for school, shopping or attending appointments" said John Ossowski, President, Canada Border Services Agency. "This pilot shows what can be accomplished when people talk, listen and work together. It also demonstrates what our shared commitment to the Border Collaboration Initiative can achieve."

Grand Chief Abram Benedict noted, "The concept of a domestic lane has been talked about for several years. I'm pleased to see that a domestic lane pilot project is now being implemented at the Cornwall Port of Entry. Wait times are a known contributor to many frustrations while crossing through the port. We hope that by implementing this pilot, wait times will be reduced. I look forward to the implementation, review and feedback from the community. We will continue to work collaboratively with the CBSA on other initiatives to improve the crossing experience."

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