



COVID-19 and Border Security

July 2020

Background

On March 21, Canada's border with the United States was closed to all but non-essential travel in order to help stop the spread of COVID-19. The border remains open for essential travel which is defined as the transportation of goods, services and work in order to not disrupt the supply chain. Students with visas, temporary foreign workers, permanent residents, and those with valid reasons for travel are permitted e.g. Canadians returning home temporarily to care for loved ones etc. What is not on the list is travel to Canada for tourism or pleasure purposes during this time. Moreover, quarantine rules have stipulated that anyone travelling must quarantine for 14 days after their arrival, again in an effort to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

British Columbians are becoming increasingly alarmed at the unchecked rise of COVID-19 infections in the United States with rates spiking above levels we saw at the start of the North American pandemic. Because a majority of Canadians live along the US border, there is an understandable concern about when the US/Canada border will re-open and what this may mean. While the level of anxiety is understandable, NNPBC believes that both the Federal and Provincial governments are aware of the risks that opening the border would expose Canadians to, and supports ongoing efforts to close border loopholes by way of "fine tuning" the process for screening essential US persons who do come to Canada as required.

It is also important to note that in the news over the last several weeks there have been stories of Americans in Canada who have experienced unpleasant and sometimes violent encounters with those who are not aware of their 'stories' or their reasons for being in Canada legitimately. In some cases, there have been accounts of US tourists who have skirted the rules by indicating they are travelling to Alaska, only to take up holiday in Canada. This behaviour is not appropriate and of course these individuals should be fined for their deception. But, these stories of rule breakers do not negate the stories of those who are here legitimately, nor do they speak for all cases of those from the US who are in Canada.

It is also worth noting that some Canadians have experienced the above-mentioned aggression simply because they are driving a vehicle with a US plate, perhaps as they live in the US but are entitled to return home during this time. While border protection and subsequent quarantine regulations are imperative in helping to contain COVID-19, nurses are well aware that violence and "othering" is detrimental to health. As Dr. Bonnie Henry noted in her July 6, 2020 COVID-19 briefing we do not know everyone's story and therefore making assumptions about their 'need' to be here is inappropriate. She also urged kindness and calm in the face of this growing worry.

Nurses as a trusted profession who work closely and intimately with patients and clients are in an excellent position to encourage understanding and compassion at a time of heightened anxiety.

Key Messages

- Ensuring the health and safety of Canadians is imperative.
- Strict border rules during COVID-19 can help to stop the spread of this illness.
- Ensuring that quarantine rules are enforced will also help stop the spread of COVID-19.
- There is a necessary process for screening individuals who cross the border into Canada that should be adhered to.
- Those US citizens who attempt to skirt our border and quarantine rules should be fined and removed from Canada.



- NNPBC urges Canadians to remember that many people cross into Canada each day for legitimate reasons.
- NNPBC strongly condemns any violence or aggression against any person in this country.
- Border protection is particularly vital at this time, and NNPBC trusts and supports the work that our colleagues at the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) are doing to keep Canadians safe.
- NNPBC urges Canadians to not make assumptions about why someone is in Canada but to report to officials any clear and verified breaking of border regulations.
- NNPBC notes that worldwide Canadians have earned their reputation for being polite as a result of our general reasonableness and overall compassion towards other people. While this time of pandemic is scary, this is not the time to forget the values that define us as Canadians.

Further Reading/Resources

- [NNPBC Issues Brief- Racialization & Politicization of COVID-19](#)
- [CBSA and COVID 19 regulations](#)
- [COVID Cases in the US- CDC](#)
- [Americans find loopholes to visit Canada](#)
- [Government of Canada- Who can travel to Canada During COVID-19](#)
- [Canadian Drivers with US License Plates Harassed](#)
- [Vancouver Island Resident with US License Plates Wants Shaming to End](#)
- [COVID-19 Update from the Ministry of Health, July 6, 2020](#)

Please feel free to direct questions and additional comments to info@nnpbc.com.