

24/7 AT THE ALDERGROVE BORDER CROSSING AN ESSENTIAL PART OF ENSURING AN OPEN BORDER

The efficient movement of people, goods and services at Canada/US land Ports of Entry is vital to the tourism industry and trade relations between the two countries.

The four Ports of Entry in Southwest British Columbia (Peace Arch, Pacific Highway, Aldergrove and Sumas) are the transportation routes for all US traffic to and from the Southwest British Columbia and the primary crossings for commercial traffic including Asia/Pacific through the Port of Vancouver. Increased security at the Border and the significant increase in the number of vehicle crossings are causing extreme delays and congestion that is hampering the movement of visitor and commercial traffic, and negatively impacting neighbouring residences and businesses. This in turn is negatively impacting on the competitive edge of U.S. and Canadian businesses and tourism, and the people who depend on jobs related to the movement of goods and people. It is not uncommon for there to be minimum one hour waits and beyond at all four Border Crossings.

Existing and projected growth rates indicate that by 2030 the population in Metro Vancouver will reach 3 million, with similar growth expected in neighbouring Fraser Valley Communities. The Port of Vancouver is currently being dramatically expanded and Asia Pacific trade through the Port is projected to increase significantly. The population growth and increased economic activity will continue to stress the border facilities.

Commencing in January 2008 the re-construction of facilities at Peace Arch will begin and is not scheduled to be completed until very close to the opening of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver/Whistler. During this construction project the Peace Arch will be limited to three lanes for traffic - one Nexus lane and two for general traffic. It is anticipated that the ensuing traffic backlog will cause many motorists to divert to alternate routes. The number of vehicle crossings will increase dramatically well in advance of the Opening Day of the Games as media, participants and visitors will be traveling to and from the various Games venues.

In summer 2009 the new Golden Ears Crossing of the Fraser River will be complete. This crossing will provide a more direct north/south transportation route for traffic between the I-5 in the U.S. and north side of the Fraser River via the Aldergrove/Lynden Border Crossing.

At the present time this border crossing has limited hours of operation from 8:00 am to 12 midnight. As a result of backups at all other 24-hour crossings, traffic begins to line up well in advance of the scheduled opening. The resulting congestion is negatively impacting residences and businesses on both sides of the border. Expansion of services and hours of operation at this Port would facilitate a smoother flow of traffic and provide relief for the over-burdened Peace Arch and Pacific Crossings.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Federal Government;

1. Work with the United States Government to extend the hours of operation at the Aldergrove British Columbia/Lynden Washington Port of Entry between Canada and the United States to 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
2. Increase clearance services for commercial traffic be increased at the Aldergrove/Lynden Port of Entry to provide access as an alternate route for import/export commercial traffic not destined to or from Metro Vancouver or the Port of Vancouver.

SUBMITTED BY THE GREATER LANGLEY, RICHMOND, ABBOTSFORD AND
CHILLIWACK CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

The Policy Review Committee supports this resolution