
The British Columbia/Washington State Partnership on Enhanced Driver's Licences

by Governor Chris Gregoire and Premier Gordon Campbell

The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative originally adopted in 2004 is a US policy requiring everyone entering or re-entering the United States to present a valid passport or other secure identity document. This article outlines steps taken by the province of British Columbia and the state of Washington to implement provisions of the WHTI by use of specially designed enhanced drivers license thereby facilitating trade and other relations between these neighbouring jurisdictions.

The United States and Canada are longstanding allies and friends. We share social and cultural ties, transportation links, cultural references and ecosystems. Our countries have developed side by side, along similar but unique paths: two experiments in democracy and development unlike any other two nations on earth.

The similarity in the relative strength and influence of our provincial and state governments also contributes to the opportunity for unique relations when we have the vision to seize them. Relations that between British Columbia and the State of Washington have never been stronger.

British Columbia and Washington share a combined population of 10 million people, a GDP of almost \$450 billion, and approximately \$10 billion in bilateral trade. We also share close personal and family ties, with social and business connections that travel regularly across the border.

Our governments have taken this close connection even further, and since 2005, Washington and British Columbia have worked to forge what is arguably the most successful formalized cross-border partnership network in North America, both multilateral and bilateral, with partners across our borders.

These relationships help us identify and respond to common concerns and take advantage of common opportunities.

Both British Columbia and Washington are strong supporters of and active participants in the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region. This bi-national, multilateral public-private partnership brings together legislators, private sector leaders and communities from the region to discuss how we can work together on shared priorities, such as open and secure borders, economic development, energy, environment, and trade. Member jurisdictions also include Alberta, Yukon, Alaska, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon.

The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region's 2008 annual summit will take place in Vancouver, July 20-24. This occasion will showcase British Columbia and highlight top international priorities of jurisdictions in this region, including how we can strengthen security at the Canada-US border while ensuring smooth and open legitimate travel and trade; the challenges of labour mobility across borders in the face of aging workforces; the region's role as gateway to the Asia Pacific, not only for North America, but also for western Europe; and the imperative of action on climate change, as climate change and greenhouse gas emissions respect no border.

Through our involvement in the PNWER, Washington and British Columbia have successfully pursued priorities and achieved actionable results that span borders, build partnerships, and have driven national agen-

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das—particularly to help support borders that are secure, but open to legitimate travel and trade.

Washington and British Columbia have also established an important bilateral partnership through High Level Dialogues between the Governor and Premier and senior cabinet members. Over the past two years, our governments have reached agreements to collaborate to take action on climate change and Pacific Ocean conservation, to cap and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and collaborate on the innovation and implementation of clean technologies. We have improved passenger rail service between Vancouver, Washington, and Vancouver, B.C. And we are cooperating on border security and cross-border transportation, and are working to improve the marketing and physical infrastructure at the border for the NEXUS and FAST programs.

We have jointly conceived, developed and implemented Enhanced Driver's Licences as a valid alternative to passports at land and sea border crossings, which both our jurisdictions formally launched the week of January 21, 2008.

The Enhanced Driver's Licence project is not only an innovative response to a significant and potentially damaging federal policy change, it is also a paradigm of action by sub-national jurisdictions that can drive a national agenda through bilateral and multilateral cooperation and advocacy.

This project was driven by the changing nature of our international border; conceived in a bilateral, cross-border forum; advocated and advanced in a cross-border partnership; and will benefit citizens by helping make our border more effective and efficient for them as they cross it.

Beginning as early as January 2008, under requirements established by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Department of State, all U.S. citizens and foreign nationals will be required to present a passport or other documents that denote identity and citizenship when entering the United States by land or sea. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) is the Administration's plan to implement this mandate.

The potential impact of WHTI is significant. Up until recently, to cross the border by land, a traveller only required an oral declaration of citizenship. Since September 11, 2001, however, control at the border has tightened, constraining tourism, spontaneous travel, and

contributing to a general thickening of the border that threatens to constrict trade, development and the growth of regional economies.

With only an estimated 23 per cent of Americans and perhaps 55 per cent of Canadians holding passports, tourism and cross border travel was already down because of confusion surrounding passport requirements. Given the deep cultural ties, trade and tourism between Washington and British Columbia, we saw the need to create a boarder crossing card that met federal security requirements specified by WHTI, but was more cost effective for families than a passport. We felt this was especially important in light of the upcoming 2009 World Police and Fire Games in Washington and the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver, B.C.

The Peace Arch border crossing, between Surrey, B.C., and Blaine, Washington, is among the busiest border-crossings between Canada and the U.S. More than 32,000 vehicles pass cross the B.C.-Washington border every day, and more than 1.3 million trucks cross the B.C.-U.S. border each year. Moreover, a recent survey of B.C. and Washington truckers estimates border crossing congestion costs operators \$60 million a year.

In October, 2005, B.C. and Washington signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance trade opportunities and create stronger ties between the two jurisdictions. The Memorandum pledged that the two governments would work co-operatively on common goals in the areas of trade, the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, the environment, tourism, technology, education, and transportation. It also set out our intention to meet regularly to address issues of mutual importance.

The first such meeting was held in June, 2006, as B.C. and Washington held our first High Level Dialogue: a full-day meeting of the Premier and Governor and our respective Cabinets. At that meeting, we co-signed a letter to President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Stephen Harper expressing concerns about the impact of WHTI on cross-border tourism.

We stated clearly that while we supported ensuring our border is secure from threats, B.C. and Washington depend on the free flow of goods and people across the border and the continued uncertainty over the passport requirements was already having a negative impact on cross-border tourism. We expressed our belief there are more effective ways to ensure security, and we invited both federal governments to work with us to pursue those options.

Starting from this first High Level Dialogue, B.C. and Washington have been working together on a range of is-



The Governor of Washington State, Chris Gregoire (l) and Premier Gordon Campbell of British Columbia have taken the lead in finding innovative ways to comply with the WHTI with minimal disruption to cross border trade and tourism.

issues to support secure borders open to legitimate trade and travel, and it was at this meeting that the Enhanced Driver's Licence was first proposed as a joint initiative to address the potential impact of WHTI.

WHTI specifically states U.S. Canada, Mexico and Bermuda citizens must have a passport "or other secure document" in order to cross the border. Since most Washington and B.C. residents carry a valid driver license, our goal was to find a way to increase security of our driver licenses so they could double as boarder crossing documents.

Since that first High Level Dialogue in Vancouver in 2006—and subsequently at the second in Seattle in 2007— B.C. and Washington have collaborated on the development of our respective programs

We compared the Washington driver's license security features with British Columbia's and discovered we both referred to the *American Association of Motor Vehicles Administrators Security Framework* as a standard to incorporate in our issuance policies, card security features, appearance and card stock.

Working together, we developed Enhanced Driver Licenses to keep the British Columbia-Washington border crossings secure, fast, and convenient for our citizens.

The Enhanced Driver's Licence is a voluntary program. For issuance, applicants bring documentation to their jurisdiction's licensing authority that proves their citizenship, residency and identity. Each Enhanced Driver's Licence is embedded with a Radio Frequency

Identification (RFID) chip inside the license. RFID is a wireless technology that retrieves data remotely.

This information technology solution allows the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency to electronically scan Washington state and British Columbia driver licenses and identification cards when entering the U.S. from Canada. This technology also allows border agents to scan machine readable information on the license and obtain instant verification of the card's authenticity and validity.

Our two jurisdictions have also worked in tandem to advocate with the US and Canadian federal governments through organizations such as PNWER to advance development and acceptance of the Enhanced Driver's Licence.

The Edmonton PNWER summit in July 2006 included Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Canada's Minister of Public Safety Stockwell Day. Border issues and the impact of WHTI were roundly discussed and the proposal of Enhanced Driver's Licences as a potential solution was advanced. Both federal representatives returned from Edmonton to their respective capitals with clear messaging that governments need to address the impact of WHTI, that PNWER jurisdictions were pressing for action, and that two jurisdictions—British Columbia and Washington—were driving ahead towards a pilot project.

In November of that year, at the PNWER winter meeting, we continued our advocacy with US diplomatic staff and federal officials. The winter of 2007, as PNWER leaders tour the provincial and state capitals as well as the federal capitals, was a further opportunity to press state governments for support and federal governments for agreement and action.

By March 2007, Washington State had signed an agreement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for a project to enable the Enhanced Driver's Licence in the state. This agreement was the decisive moment in the pursuit of the Enhanced Driver's Licence as a potential solution to border congestion. It was a clear signal the enhanced driver's licence was more than a concept or wish: It was a legitimate contender in a new, responsive approach to effective border management.

In July 2007, at the PNWER annual summit, border issues were again a policy priority at PNWER and both Washington and B.C. used the forum to press for further action on Enhanced Drivers Licences and a more responsive, citizen-centred approach to border management.

Now, by January 2008, both BC and Washington have launched the first Enhanced Driver's Licence programs in North America. British Columbia's pilot project was

over-subscribed within just over 48 hours, and Washington received some 4,000 applications and had issued 400 EDLs within about one week of announcing.

This powerful public response may have surprised some, though both Washington and B.C. anticipated it would be welcome by a general public that is accustomed to seeing the border as little more than a formality in most cases.

But the appeal of the enhanced driver's licence does not stop in B.C. and Washington. Ontario, Quebec, Yukon and Manitoba in Canada are also working actively to develop their own enhanced driver's licences. In the U.S., Arizona, Vermont, and New York have signed agreements with the Department of Homeland Security similar to Washington's.

This one idea, from a bilateral, cross-border meeting, advocated and developed through bilateral and multi-lateral cross-border engagement, has spread and set an agenda in two nations, and driven national action. It has also tapped into a fundamental need of our citizenry:

that our borders should not be an impermeable, thick barrier that separates and constricts our lives and our livelihoods, but an effective tool that addresses our mutual security concerns and that is responsive to our citizens, open to legitimate travel and trade.

Through programs like the enhanced driver's licence and other cross-border initiatives, we are not only building a better future for Washington and British Columbia families, but we are sharing our successes with other premiers and governors who may also choose to make their state a great place to live and ensure their residents may continue to enjoy the freedoms to which they are accustomed.

That demonstrates what border regions can achieve when they identify mutual priorities and collaborate across the border to achieve objectives of national importance. We need to recognize the strength that is present in our midst, and the symbolic strength of collaborating across borders.