

United States Senate

February 14, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
United States Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave NE
Washington, D.C. 20016

Secretary Mayorkas:

As the Biden Administration prepares to end the national emergency and public health emergency declarations for COVID-19 on May 11, 2023, I write to urge the Department of Homeland Security to swiftly reopen all ports of entry in Montana to pre-pandemic hours and terminate the vaccination requirements for Canadian truck drivers entering the United States through land ports of entry. These policies are wrong for Montana and it is past time to reverse them.

Limiting hours at ports and requiring Canadian truck drivers to be vaccinated is harming farmers, ranchers, business owners, and families across Montana. The vaccine mandate and limited port hours restrict trade and travel across the northern borders, making it harder for folks to get the imports they need. Canada ended its vaccine requirements for American truck drivers last year, yet the United States continues this unnecessary rule. Last year, I stood up to the Democrats and President Biden by pushing to end these policies, voting to end similar vaccine requirements, and voting to end the COVID-19 national emergency. It is time to cut this red tape and help move the American economy forward.

I started farming on my family's farm as a kid and still run it to this day. As a third-generation farmer, I know a lot of people in Washington don't understand the challenges we face in Montana. I recently met with folks in northeast Montana about the upcoming farm bill and other priority issues. During my public meeting in Plentywood, Montanans shared numerous stories about how the reduced hours at the nearby Port of Raymond are negatively effecting families and small businesses. For example, the region's largest implement dealership is across the border from Plentywood in Saskatchewan. If a producer in the middle of planting or harvest has a breakdown outside the hours of operation at the Port of Raymond, they may have to wait until the next day for the border to open in order to get the parts they need.

Additionally, the Regina International Airport is the nearest major airport for Plentywood and many communities in northeastern Montana. By limiting the ability of folks in northeastern Montana to go across the border early in the morning and late at night, travelers are unable to take certain flights. I also heard from small business owners in Plentywood who said that the

long-haul truckers that used to stop in their community and support the small businesses on Main Street are disappearing.

The consequences of these reduced hours are not limited to Plentywood or the Port of Raymond. Farmers and ranchers in Glasgow who rely on the Port of Opheim continue to struggle to get the inputs they need before the port of entry closes at 5:00pm. Folks in Malta are concerned that the Port of Morgan will not be opened for extended summer hours again this year and about how continued weekend closures will impact their summer motorsports season.

Too often folks in Washington don't understand what a hard day's work looks like and the challenges Montana families face when federal policies, such as limiting port hours, remain in effect for too long. Trade and travel across the northern border are critical for businesses and families across Montana and the United States. Restoring the hours of operations to ports of entry in Montana and ending the one-sided vaccine mandate for Canadian truck drivers and other travelers will ensure that Montana communities and the American economy can continue to grow.

I stand ready to assist your efforts and strengthen security and trade across the northern border.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jon Tester