

Ministry of Tourism**Ministère du Tourisme**

Minister

Ministre

9th Floor, Hearst Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2E1
Tel: (416) 326-9326
Fax: (416) 326-9338

9^e étage, Édifice Hearst
900, rue Bay
Toronto, ON M7A 2E1
Tél.: (416) 326-9326
Télec.: (416) 326-9338



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Dear Tourism Partner:

I am writing to update you on recent developments in Ontario's efforts to persuade the U.S. Government to allow alternative border crossing documents to passports when entering or re-entering the United States.

As you may know, Premier Dalton McGuinty recently went with Manitoba Premier Gary Doer and New Brunswick Premier Shawn Graham to the U.S. National Governors Association 2007 Winter Meeting in Washington, D.C. to press for the use of driver's licences with upgraded security features and a citizenship designation at the border. The Premier was well received and the Government of Ontario's proposal regarding driver's licences is gaining support. Our approach of encouraging like-minded U.S. officials to champion our concerns is paying off.

Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (D-NY), who is also the Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, has introduced a bill into the House of Representatives that would require the U.S. Government to work with at least one state in a pilot project to enhance driver's licences to meet the legal requirements for land and sea travellers.

The head of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) – where opposition to passport alternatives has been strongest in the U.S. Government – has stated that the DHS will consider the use of more secure driver's licences as border identification. The DHS is currently soliciting public comment on whether and how a Real ID driver's licence could be made compliant with the passport requirement law.

One of Ontario's longstanding recommendations has been that children should be exempted from the passport requirement as long as they are travelling with properly documented adult guardians. The DHS announced on February 22 its intent to propose flexibility regarding travel documents for Canadian and U.S. children aged 15 and under, with parental consent, and those aged 16-18 in organized groups, so that they would be allowed to cross land and sea borders with identification other than a passport.

We are continuing to work hard on this issue, encouraging the federal government and the U.S. administration to come up with practical ways to fulfil the spirit of the passport legislation in ways that will have the least negative impact for the tourism industry on both sides of the border. To this end, our government has announced that Ontario is moving forward with a driver's licence with cutting edge security features. We remain interested in working with the State of Michigan to pilot test an enhanced driver's licence as a border-crossing document.

Thank you for your continued interest in this important issue, and for your support of our efforts to ensure that the border remains open to tourists. As always, your discussion of this issue with your U.S. business contacts is a helpful contribution to the campaign to keep the border secure and open.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jim Bradley".

Jim Bradley
Minister