

June 3, 2021

Premier Doug Ford
Room 281
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

By email

Dear Premier Ford,

Re: Easing of interprovincial border restrictions

We write today to ascertain the timing or the criteria that the Province of Ontario will use to allow cross-border travel for residents of other provinces who own residential property in Ontario.

Non-Ontario Canadian residents who are residential property owners and taxpayers in Ontario have been unable to access their properties during the lockdown, due to the closures at the Ontario border. Most are seasonal residents of Ontario who come to summer homes, mainly in the months of May through September.

A great number of property owners in rural and northern Ontario are residents of other provinces, notably from neighbouring Manitoba and Quebec. These longstanding seasonal residents are vital to the local economies and to the character of our lake and river communities.

We note that a number of local politicians, business leaders and others across Ontario are calling for a plan for a re-opening of the Ontario border.

We encourage the Government of Ontario to articulate a path forward to more normalized border operations, in concert with public health and other officials in Canada and begin to put in place the protocols to ensure such entrants to Ontario do so safely. This would be consistent with the end of the provincial stay at home order on June 2.

On behalf of our many members from outside of Ontario, we respectfully request your timely response as to what criteria you plan to use to eventually allow border access into Ontario for these individuals, and what if any measures will be requisite for such access upon the reopening of the border. Our members and their immediate families are understandably anxious to get to their properties, check them for winter damage, and carry out any repairs and maintenance that may be needed. They need not widely circulate in our communities, and accordingly, they pose significantly different risks than tourists or day shoppers.

While we appreciate that the intent of banning non-essential travel is to lessen the spread potential of COVID-19 and its variants, there will be a time when allowing owners of properties in Ontario to access their properties will be reasonable and justified. These individuals will be travelling by car, can easily bring sufficient supplies to self-isolate, and their properties are remote.

FOCA appreciates and agrees that Ontario's pandemic policy should be guided primarily by health and safety concerns.

FOCA has been supportive of the public health measures that protect community health but with vaccinations now covering a significant part of the Canadian population, some benefit should accrue to those who have done their part to address this virus head on. We are hopeful that, as dictated by a lessening of the public health threat, we can look forward to the reopening of Ontario's borders with our neighbouring provinces. We should note that our non-Ontario seasonal residents are not just taxpayers, but (some, for generations) have been active contributors to the economic, cultural, historical and environmental life of rural and northern Ontario.

We appreciate all your efforts to keep us safe and hope that as we begin to emerge from this crisis, a measured and thoughtful plan of reopening will include provisions for lower risk travelers to Ontario.

Many thanks for your consideration, and we look forward to your response and an action plan at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Rees". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Terry Rees, Executive Director
On behalf of
Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, Inc.

FOCA is an Ontario association of over 500 community groups and represent the interests of the 250,000+ waterfront landowners who collectively contribute over \$800 million each year in property taxes, and who collectively own 15,000 kilometres of freshwater shorelines and 50,000 hectares of environmentally important lands.