



Eliminating the Barriers To Cross-Border Tourism Development

PRESS RELEASE

WHTI Extension Just First Step in Determining Best Solutions to Travel I.D. Legislation

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For More Information Contact:
Arlene White, Executive Director
Tel: 905-401-4450 (cell)
Tel: 905-871-6454 (office)
arlene.white@btapartners.com

The official word that the WHTI extension had been approved by the House and Senate late Friday, September 29, is welcome news to U.S and Canadian tourism and business leaders, especially those in the particularly hard-hit cross-border regions.

According to Arlene White, Executive Director of the Binational Tourism Alliance, "After a lengthy process that saw the bill debated by Conference Committee, House Leadership, the House and Senate, and had many of us wondering if the WHTI wording would remain intact, it was a relief to hear from our Washington colleagues late Friday night that the bill had passed the House and Senate. We now know that the implementation of WHTI has been extended to June 2009, with several requirements that go along with the extension. These include ensuring technology meets certain standards, that it has been shared with Canada and Mexico, agreement on fees, alternative procedures to be developed for groups of children, and that the necessary technology infrastructure and training are in place to roll out the proposed plan."

Important to note is that the approved WHTI extension refers specifically to land and sea requirements – air travel is not a part of this approved wording, and is currently under review by Department of Homeland Security for potential implementation as of January 8, 2007.

“We are extremely pleased with the outcomes of this process, but recognize that much work still needs to be done”, advised White “We must find better ways to inform a very confused public about the current identification requirements and existing options like the NEXUS card, while we continue to work closely with our government and business partners in Washington, Ottawa and locally, on the most appropriate documentation and processes that will be acceptable to individuals, as well as satisfy the legislation. The BTAs position on WHTI remains consistent - we should improve upon the existing forms of I.D. before we introduce something new to our North American residents.”

Since the April 2005 WHTI announcement, Northern cross-border regions have suffered from reduced visitor and resident travel because of the general public’s confusion over the rumoured need for a passport to travel by land, sea or air.

“The delay buys us the necessary time to collaborate on the best solutions, and we don’t have time to waste. It’s very clear that should DHS meet the requirements as outlined in the bill prior to June 2009, this date could still be moved up” said White. “ We understand and support the need for improved security in this global economy, but not at the expense of the daily economic, cultural and social realities in cross-border regions and our two countries.”

Additional information on the WHTI legislation and BTA WHTI Action Plan is available at www.btapartners.com