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June 4, 2021

The Rt. Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister  
The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister  
The Honourable William Blair, Minister of Public Safety  
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health

Dear Prime Minister, Minister Freeland, Minister Blair and Minister Hajdu,

**Re: Exemption for American cottage owners to allow them access to their properties this summer**

Further to the joint letter from the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) sent to you today, we are writing to ask for your urgent consideration of the request to **allow fully-vaccinated American cottage owners into Canada and be able to access their cottages as soon as possible this summer**. This request is consistent with recent calls from both US political leaders and US/Canadian business interests to expand low risk cross border travel.

Please note that **we are not asking for the border to be opened** – simply an additional exemption to add to the many exemptions already in place. In this context we note that special consideration is currently being contemplated for the Calgary Stampede and the NHL play-offs. We would ask that this exemption request for American cottage owners is added to the agenda for those cabinet discussions.

The logic of this proposal is based on:

**Safety:** Americans who are able to prove that they have been fully vaccinated and are willing to abide by all local health and safety protocols, will pose very little to no risk to Canadians.

**Fairness:** American cottage owners pay property taxes in Canada and it is not fair they should be indefinitely denied access to these properties.

**Residency Status:** American cottagers helped found some of the many cottage communities across Georgian Bay and have been generously contributing to these communities as well as their causes (environmental, cultural, and charitable) for more than a century. If not by birth, they are Canadians at heart!

**Economics:** the 1,000s of American cottage owners across Canada contribute \$10s of millions of dollars to local economies.

**Vaccination/Infection Rates:** Infection rates throughout most of the US have dropped significantly and are now generally below Canadian infection rates (4 week rolling rate per population); the US vaccinated population is now approaching herd immunity; further research is confirming that vaccinated adults are highly unlikely to contract or spread the virus; and, vaccination continues to be effective against variants

**Environmental:** American property owners need to look after their properties to ensure no (lack of) maintenance issue is posing an environmental threat. Seasonal properties need constant upkeep and can quickly deteriorate.

**Ease of Implementation:** It should be straightforward to process proof of property ownership and full vaccination at the border.

**Compassion:** We have received numerous heartfelt communications confirming the distress that is being caused to our American friends and neighbours by this continued lack of access to what they consider to be their spiritual homes. Furthermore, the many who are of advanced age know that they have only a few more years left to be able to make the journey, and to lose two years would be a major blow to them.

**Risk:** overall the risk posed by allowing this exception has diminished significantly and, with the appropriate safeguards, can now virtually eliminate any risk to Canadians from allowing US property owners to gain access – this could include only allowing owners of property in rural locations to be granted this exception.

We believe that, for the above reasons, American cottage property owners belong in a separate category (e.g. “non-resident property owners”) that elevates them above the average American visitor and should, therefore, give them access to their properties in the earliest phase of what we expect will be a phased approach to the reopening of the border, hopefully before July 1.

Our American friends and neighbours have patiently waited and have already missed one summer season at their beloved cottages because they respected the need for caution. We believe that in summer 2021, because of vaccinations, the situation has fundamentally changed and they can now access their cottages with little to no risk to Canadians and to the benefit of the cottage communities for the reasons stated above.

The timing of this decision is critical. Unless this exception is put in place before the end of June, most US families will miss a second season (July/August being the season) at their Canadian seasonal residences. We therefore request a decision by the next rollover date of June 21.

We also note that we have not received any response to our previous letters (attached) that addresses the issues we have raised, only acknowledgements of receipt.

We humbly request that you consider our request and act upon it urgently so another cottage season is not lost to people whose spiritual and emotional home is in our beautiful cottage country.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rupert Kindersley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**Rupert Kindersley**  
**Executive Director**

**PS** The Georgian Bay Association acts as the voice for approximately 18,000 cottagers on the north and east coasts of Georgian Bay, approximately 26% of whom are American citizens.