

COVID-19 UPDATE: Update on Canadian Border Closing; SSA Stops In-Person Services

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Update on the Closing of the Canadian Border to Most Foreign Nationals: March 17, 2020

Canada is closing its borders to most foreign nationals to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Restrictions on foreign nationals (almost all non-Canadian travelers who are not citizens, permanent residents, or—for the moment—US citizens) traveling to Canada by air will become effective on Wednesday, March 18th at noon. Others exempt from the ban include airline crews, diplomats, and immediate family members of Canadians and Canadian landed immigrants (permanent residents).

We are not aware of any restrictions relating to land, sea or rail ports of entry to Canada at this time, assuming foreign nationals are otherwise admissible. However, anyone entering Canada from abroad will now be required to self-isolate for 14 days. There is no currently available information regarding what the requirements will be for self-isolation, how they will be implemented, or penalties for failing to self-isolate. Foreign national travelers to Canada (other than those identified as exceptions in this posting) should not risk long-term immigration consequences by violating the self-isolation rule. Anyone exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 will be denied entry to Canada.

Exemptions to the self-isolation rule exist for:

1. Healthy workers in trade and transportation sector
2. Healthy people that have to cross the border for work (including healthcare providers and infrastructure workers)

Cross-border trade and commerce between the U.S. and Canada will continue, with goods being permitted to cross the border in an effort to ensure the continued flow of foodstuff, medical supplies and other essential goods between North American trade partners—and to lessen the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on both countries. The assurance of the continued flow of goods across the border is in line with the commitment to trade evidenced last week by Canada, whose Parliament finally signed off on the USMCA—the trade agreement agreed between leaders of the U.S., Mexico and Canada in 2018, but which has been struggling for ratification by all three countries since. With Canada’s action by Parliament, it is now on track to fully replace NAFTA by late spring or early summer.

U.S. Social Security Offices Closed

Finally, all local U.S. Social Security offices will be closed to the public for in-person service indefinitely, starting today (March 17, 2020). This decision is intended to protect older Americans and people with underlying medical

conditions, as well as Social Security Administration (SSA) employees, during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, the SSA is still providing services by phone, where available, and is able to provide certain “critical services.” Please see <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2020/#3-2020-2> for more information.

Check back on this blog for ongoing updates on immigration-related consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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