



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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US - Canada border restrictions must keep commerce flowing and recognize our critical integrated supply chains

The [Pacific NorthWest Economic Region](#) calls on both the United States and Canada governments to recognize the criticality of the US-Canada integrated supply chains, especially as it may relate to the urgency of the COVID-19 response.

Today's announcement to close the US - Canada border to all travel except "essential travel and supply chains" could have cascading impacts, and we urge both countries to allow commerce and critical service personnel to continue to flow across our shared borders. The understanding of what is considered essential is complex and not often well-understood. [PNWER's Center for Regional Disaster Resilience](#) has examined regional cross-border interdependencies and has demonstrated that there are many goods and services that play a crucial role in keeping our critical infrastructures and services up and running. Critical infrastructures and service providers depend on suppliers and resources from both sides of the border, and we must continue to find ways to facilitate these linkages and allow the flow of commerce to continue.

Our work in analyzing regional cross-border infrastructure interdependencies has shown that criticality is a dynamic function in any emergency. Certain supplies or functions may not seem essential but may be absolutely necessary for our public health system to operate. We cannot expect our border agents to be able to determine what "essential goods or services" are. Disruptions in supply chains may have cascading impacts to both the US and Canadian critical services and economies and could cause many unintended consequences.

PNWER's Center for Regional Disaster Resilience has focused on critical infrastructure interdependencies since 2001 and has conducted numerous exercises focused on pandemic scenarios. The Center released a comprehensive, 185-page report focused on [pandemic preparedness](#) with specific recommendations for both government and businesses as well as a

detailed [pandemic exercise report](#) with lessons learned. These reports and other related resources can be found online at <https://www.regionalresilience.org/public-health.html>

"PNWER has worked to develop cross-border trade, commerce, and build trusting relationships for 30 years," said Montana Senator Mike Cuffe, President of the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region or PNWER, "and we will continue to work with both border agencies to ensure that important trade and commerce continues to flow across the US - Canada border, as well as necessary and important supplies and services to address the pandemic. We have also submitted the recommendations of PNWER's Center for Regional Disaster Resilience to the White House last week, with specific recommendations for pandemic response."

Matt Morrison, Executive Director of PNWER said, "We have spent 20 years examining the interdependencies of critical infrastructure and pandemic response plans. What we must prevent is any border agent making a decision on what is and what is not 'essential.' As both governments consider closing the border, it is of extreme importance to allow commerce to flow during this crisis."

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ABOUT PNWER

The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) is a public/private non-profit organization created by statute in 1991. Member jurisdictions include Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Washington, and the Canadian provinces and territories of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and Yukon. PNWER's mission is to increase the economic well-being and quality of life for all citizens of the region; identify and promote "models of success; and serve as a conduit to exchange information.