

St. Catharines Chamber Responds to U.S. PASS Identification Card Announcement



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On Tuesday, January 17, 2006, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced a new travel card for Americans who make trips across Canadian and Mexican borders.

The new documentation requirements for Americans visiting Canada and Mexico were mandated by legislation Congress passed in 2004 to strengthen security at border crossings. Traditionally, Americans who have traveled to countries in the Western Hemisphere have not needed to present passports upon their return. But the new law requires that secure documents be presented upon their return.

Walter Sendzik, Executive Vice President and General Manager of the St. Catharines Chamber of Commerce participated in a conference call with officials of the U.S. Homeland Security office to seek more information about the announced PASS Identification Card.

According to the plan, all U.S. citizens traveling into Canada and Mexico effective January 1, 2008 will require the PASS card. The cost of the card will be at least 50 per cent less expensive than a regular American passport, and a sliding cost scale for families is currently under review. Nexus cards will continue to be an accepted form of identification for U.S. travelers.

Although the Chamber has great concerns about the impact of additional identification at the border, it is encouraged by the announcement. "There have been a number of options floated by the U.S. Federal government regarding the issue of border security and identification," states Mr. Sendzik. "This plan appears to be the most cost efficient for U.S. travelers at this time."

"American travelers to Niagara are an important component of our local economy, and the Chamber will continue to work with all levels of government on both sides of the border to ensure the impact on business will be considered in all decisions that are being made in relation to this issue," adds Mr. Sendzik.

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