



MEDIA RELEASE

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RE: Amherst, Sackville mayors urge N.B. premier to get into the spirit of the Atlantic bubble

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – The lengthy delays travellers are experiencing trying to enter New Brunswick from Nova Scotia fly in the face of the spirit of the Atlantic bubble, say the mayors of Amherst, N.S., and Sackville, N.B.

“The spirit of the Atlantic bubble is to make the movement of individuals living within the four provinces – New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island – simple and easy so people living within the bubble can do business and socialize,” Amherst Mayor David Kogon said on Thursday, July 16, 2020.

“That simply isn’t happening. People are experiencing one to two hour waits when they are trying to enter or re-enter New Brunswick from Nova Scotia and that is negatively impacting our businesses. The bubble is supposed to help stimulate the economy and it is not doing that. It is having the opposite effect.”

“It is the inconsistency in crossing that is of most concern,” Sackville Mayor John Higham said. “Essential workers came through fine before the bubble, but now they do not know what awaits them on any day.”

Kogon expressed the same concerns in an email he sent New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs on July 15. In it he asked the premier to meet with him and Higham to discuss the matter.

In the letter, Kogon noted the two mayors clearly understood and supported the closing of the border, but with the flattening of the COVID-19 curve they noted they had called in mid-June for the opening of the border.



As a result, the mayors were pleased the Atlantic bubble came into being on July 3 as “the closed border had created extra hardships for our two communities” whose economies have been historically “tied and reliant on the other,” Kogon wrote.

However, the two communities are not benefitting from the Atlantic bubble due to the excessive delays people experience while attempting to cross from Nova Scotia into New Brunswick, he wrote.

“This is essentially creating a closed border as people can’t or won’t travel to New Brunswick,” Kogon wrote.

Amherst’s mayor added he hoped Premier Higgs “would be able to meet with the two of us to discuss the difficulties and possible solutions.”

As an example of the problems the delays at the New Brunswick border are causing, Kogon said he was approached by an Amherst businessman who informed him that an employee who resides in New Brunswick quit and a second is threatening to quit because they can’t afford the time it takes to get back into New Brunswick following their shifts in Nova Scotia.

“You simply can’t add one to two hours to an eight-hour shift and expect people to tolerate that,” Kogon said.

As another example, he pointed to a family friend who has a cottage in New Brunswick and normally shops in Amherst while at the cottage.

“They spend a fair amount of money at our grocery stores and other Amherst businesses,” Kogon said. “But they aren’t doing that this year because they say it is too much of a hassle to get back into New Brunswick following their trip to Amherst.”

The same thing is happening in the other direction as Sackville businesses are telling Higham that Amherst and area residents aren’t going to New Brunswick to shop because it is too difficult to get into New Brunswick in a timely fashion.

“Our downtown is based on tertiary services,” Higham said. “With an open border, we expected many Amherst visitors to come back. But the feeling is that border uncertainty has kept most of them away so far.”

Sackville also has many residents who “work in Amherst and vice-versa, so ensuring they can cross the border efficiently and consistently needs to be a priority,” the Sackville mayor said. “Cross-border traffic is also essential to our summer tourism industry. With all the current uncertainty around travel, unnecessary delays at the border are not helping to instill confidence in the travelling public.”

The mayors said they don’t understand the necessity of having residents who live within the Atlantic Bubble fill out paperwork each time they need to cross a provincial border that lies



within the bubble.

“If I’m a resident who lives within the bubble and haven’t left the bubble, travel within the bubble should be without impediment,” Kogon said.

The mayors said they are also left wondering why the checkpoints are not simply in locations where people are attempting to enter the bubble, such as airports, land borders with jurisdictions that lie outside the bubble and ports where ships from outside the bubble dock.

“It’s at those entry points where people should be screened and steps are taken to ensure they self-isolate for the 14 days,” Kogon said. “Since the New Brunswick-Nova Scotia border lies within the bubble, I would say there shouldn’t be a checkpoint there. But, if there has to be one, it should be one that has minimal impact on travellers who live within the bubble.”

People who reside within the bubble could be given a pass that would facilitate easier travel between all the provinces within the bubble, the mayors said.

As for the New Brunswick checkpoint, Kogon suggested it could be moved from its current location right on the Trans Canada Highway in New Brunswick to the outgoing weigh scale on the Nova Scotia side of the border “where there is ample room that they could have several lanes that could be used to make the border crossing more efficient.”

“This is an important issue,” the mayors said. “We have to convince the premiers of the four provinces, especially the premiers of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia that unless changes are made to ensure the free flow of traffic within the bubble, the economies of Amherst and Sackville, N.B., will have difficulty recovering from the pandemic.”

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