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Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative Field Hearing

Written Testimony

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Thank you for holding this Field Hearing and allowing us to address the committee.

I am here today representing Alice DeSouza, the Director of Travel & Tourism Development for the State of New Hampshire and to present her testimony.

“On behalf of the tourism industry throughout New Hampshire, I urge you to support efforts that will minimize the negative impacts on New Hampshire’s economy that will surely result if the WHTI as currently proposed is adopted.

“To give you a sense of the economic impact of the Canadian visitor market, I offer the following:

- Canadian travel to New Hampshire represents our largest international vacation travel segment, with an estimated 328,000 1 night or more stays in 2004, a 6% increase over 2003.
- The average spending by Canadian overnight travelers was up 46% in 2004 over the year 2000.
- Additionally in 2004, there were an estimated 465,000 day trips to New Hampshire to visit family and friends and to take advantage of tax-free shopping and an increasingly attractive exchange rate.

Recognizing the significant impact on our economy of the Canadian travel dollar and the considerable opportunity for developing further the tourism market from Canada, this office has established a relationship with Travel Marketing Experts, Inc. who promote tourism to New Hampshire on our behalf. Some comments from Christopher Ryall, President of that company”:



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“The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative will affect both tourism and trade between our two countries. New Hampshire and other border states are especially vulnerable to sustaining losses from this initiative.

“From a Canadian perspective, the requirement of a passport will be a hindrance and costly exercise. Currently, passports for Canadian citizens are only valid for five years versus ten years in the US. The current fee for an adult passport (age 16 years and older) is \$92 Canadian and \$39 for a child’s passport (3-15 years of age). For a family of four, once photos are secured, paperwork submitted, etc. the cost will reach close to \$300. For senior travelers who for decades have not been required to have a passport to travel to the United State, the process and expense of getting a passport is likely to result in their remaining in Canada.

“It is our belief that if WHTI is implemented in its current form, it will have a major impact on those short getaways or same day visits to New Hampshire. Of the 793,800 New Hampshire visits, 465,000 are same day visits. State parks, retail outlets, area attractions and New Hampshire’s craft shops will all feel the impact of this loss.

“It is quite clear that from both sides of the border, neither government currently has adequately funded or has allocated the necessary human resources to handle the onslaught of increased passport applications – if indeed people apply for them at all.

“Finally, besides the devastating affect WHTI in its current form and timeframe would have on tourism revenues, it will also have a tremendous impact on the close to \$400 Billion in trade between Canada and the US, again with the border states bearing the brunt of the loss.”

“It is impossible to think of New Hampshire’s people, places and traditions, without recognizing the important role our relationship with Canada has had in shaping New Hampshire and the economic contribution that relationship provides.

“I urge you to support all efforts to mitigate the certain devastating impact WHTI in its present form will have on New Hampshire’s social and economic future.

“Specifically, reduce the cost of border crossing by waiving the cost for children and seniors, most of whom do not have passports but who are part of the majority of the family vacations and visits to family and friends to a nominal level for families, seniors and delay implementation for at least 18 months in order to resolve technical and procedural issues on both sides of the border.”

Thank you.