



COMMITTEE *ON* HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Opening Statement of Oversight, Investigations & Accountability Subcommittee Ranking Member Glenn Ivey (D-MD) for Republican Northern Border Hearing

March 28, 2023

I would like to take a moment at the beginning of this hearing to express my deepest condolences to those affected by the devastating tornado that impacted Ranking Member Thompson's Mississippi district this past weekend. I would also like to acknowledge the tragic act of targeted violence that left six dead in Nashville yesterday, including three children.

These devastating incidents, over which the Department of Homeland Security has broad authority to address, puts into perspective the frivolity of holding a hearing on the manufactured Northern border crisis. My Republican colleagues seem intent on using cherry-picked statistics, misleading statements, and inflammatory rhetoric to sell a story that the facts don't back up. So, let me be clear about what the facts do show.

Republicans probably won't tell you that the number of times that U.S. Border Patrol has encountered migrants between ports of entry on the Northern border peaked in fiscal year 2019, during the Trump Administration, and has not reached that level since. It is true that the total number of times that Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has encountered someone at ports of entry and between ports of entry has recently increased. But encounters on the Northern border are a mere five percent of total encounters. This is hardly a reason to paint the Northern border as a source of "death, drugs, and disorder."

As longtime allies and trading partners, Canadian officials have worked closely with our own government to monitor and respond to changes in global migration patterns, while facilitating the legitimate trade and travel that serves as an economic lynchpin for both our countries. Canada is our country's largest trading partner, with nearly \$2.6 billion in goods and services crossing our shared border every day and contributing to thousands of jobs in both countries. Canadian companies operating in the U.S. directly employ over 630,000 Americans. And numerous industries benefit from trade agreements between the U.S. and Canada, from steel and aluminum manufacturers to auto parts, and most recently the two countries established an agreement to strengthen the cross-border semiconductor manufacturing corridor.

Following the lifting of pandemic restrictions, CBP has worked closely with their Canadian partners to dramatically reduce the backlog of individuals requesting pre-screening for expedited travel across the Northern border. And just last week, President Biden met with Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau to announce a new agreement on how to treat migrants crossing the border in both directions. Canadian officials also announced a plan to welcome an additional 15,000 migrants on a humanitarian basis from countries in Central American and the Caribbean. The Canadian government plans to accept over 460,000 new permanent residents this year. As we know, increasing legal pathways for migration reduces the numbers of people who seek to enter illegally.

President Biden's visit last week also marked the announcement of a new global coalition to counter synthetic drugs, such as fentanyl. Canada and the U.S. will lead a concentrated effort to expand prosecution of drug traffickers, dismantle criminal networks, prevent the trafficking of drugs across our shared border, and disrupt the supply of precursor chemicals. While there are unique challenges on the Northern border, the U.S.-Canadian partnership is strong and prepared to take these challenges head on.

So instead of making a mountain out of the molehill that is, in reality, a small increase in activity on the Northern border, I'd ask that we focus on the issues that really matter. We can sit here and argue about statistics and play with numbers and percentages all day. But let's not forget that we're talking about real people with real lives that matter, and their trials and tribulations should not be boiled down to a misleading statistic used to score political points. As we look to our Northern border and how we might best solve the challenges we see there, it's important to remember that modest challenges can be managed effectively with our Canadian partners.

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