

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

anywhere else,” Andrew says. “Now, as things go by, it’s golf. It’s a time when we go out with sticks and hit the ball. It’s a time when we joke. We laugh. We share a beer or a coffee.”

‘We’re here when you’re ready’

North of the border, tariffs and threats of annexation from the U.S. have created a unified front, seemingly strengthened the longer hostilities linger.

Rob Costanzo, city manager of Surrey, B.C., says the sentiment has little to do with the American people and more to do with Trump. In a July 31 post on Truth Social, for example, Trump jabbed at Canada over the country’s announcement that it will recognize a Palestinian state.

“That will make it very hard for us to make a Trade Deal with them. Oh’ Canada!!!” Trump posted.

Canada’s Liberal Party rode anti-Trump sentiment the prime ministership for Carney, plus 169 out of 343 House of Commons seats, compared to 144 seats for the Conservative Party of Canada. Everyone had assumed the Liberal Party was going to suffer this election, Costanzo says, but Carney’s image as a strong economic leader willing to stand up to Trump turned the tables.

But geopolitical relations and trade tiffs aren’t the only factors keeping Canadians at home.

The exchange rate as of Sept. 26 was one Canadian dollar to about 72 U.S. cents, compared to a 10-year average of about 76 cents. It’s a small difference but enough to make a trip to the U.S. less appealing, says WWU’s Trautman.

Siemens, the mayor of Abbotsford, says some Canadians are also leery about crossing the border while the U.S. is actively cracking down on immigration. It’s particularly acute for the ethnically diverse town, which is a little more than a 4-mile drive from the border. According to the city’s 2024 demographic breakdown, more than 40% of its residents are a “visible minority group.”

“That’s an extremely sensitive issue for us,” Siemens says. “I have a friend who was born in another country. He is afraid to go across. I’ve heard from several others that just because of their ethnicity and the color of their skin, they feel they are questioned more rigorously and more harshly than somebody that’s Caucasian. That causes me great con-

FEELING THE SQUEEZE

The Border Policy Research Institute at Western Washington University, along with the Bellingham chamber, published a survey of 58 local businesses this summer that found:

- More than 50% said their business has been impacted by changes to cross-border travel.
- 73% of respondents who said they were impacted were small- or medium-sized businesses.
- 67% of all respondents said they expect costs to increase because of the trade dispute between the U.S. and Canada.
- 48% said they fear losing business.
- 38% said importing from Canada was critical for them.
- 59% said their business relies on Canadian customers.

A DIMINISHED PRESENCE

25%

Decline in personal vehicle crossings from Canada to Washington in August, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation

23%

Year-to-date decline in personal vehicle crossings to Washington from Canada through August

19%

The overall decline in personal vehicle crossings from Canada to the U.S. through August

More than 50%

Share of international visitors to Washington last year who were Canadians, according to State of Washington Tourism

\$240

Amount the average Canadian spent on a trip to Washington last year

\$584M

Visitor spending by the more than 1.7 million Canadian travelers to King County in 2024, according to Visit Seattle. That represents 6.6% of the region’s total visitor spending and 60% of its international visitor spending.

\$775M

visitor spending in Whatcom County last year. Travelers from Seattle and Vancouver, B.C., are the county’s biggest visitor markets.



cern, because that’s not right.”

Washington business owners worry that, even if relations between the two countries ease, Canadian consumer habits will have changed in ways that will permanently damage bottom lines. Cuba, for example, had been a popular tourist destination for Americans before the Cuban Revolution and the 1962 trade embargo, which largely remains intact today despite a slight thaw during the Obama administration.

It would be a potential worst-case scenario for the two nations. To try and mend relations, the tourism bureau Visit Bellingham has a “We Love Canadians” page on its website. Visit Bellingham has also made a toolkit for Whatcom County businesses to help communicate with Canadians.

Treat says locals have gone to Peace Arch Historical State Park, the main border crossing in the area, with signs of support for Canada.

Visit Bellingham CEO Dylan Deane-Boyle says Whatcom County lodging numbers were down

“When you’re a small hotel, each booking, each relationship, each guest is really important. If they change their habits, they might not come back.”

Teri Treat, managing partner of the Inn at Lynden

more than 7% year over year in 2025 through May, with the Canadian boycotts playing a major role. State of Washington Tourism says the average Canadian spent \$240 on a visit to Washington last year.

“What we’re saying to our Cana-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



Top: Veteran and former Alaskan bush pilot Bill Devine stands on the hillside overlooking his cabins in the Nooksack River Valley, just east of Maple Falls in rural Whatcom County.

Bottom right: A sign welcomes Canadian guests at the Semiahmoo Resort in Blaine, Washington.

Advanced Integration



Denali's customer-centric approach gives us the power to connect with the why of our customers and align with their purpose.

This shared focus enables us to innovate and integrate Industry 4.0 technologies that transform operations, accelerate growth, and achieve what matters most.

This is the Power of **Advanced Integration**.

PUGET SOUND
BUSINESS JOURNAL

Supercharge your visibility with **branded content**

71% of our advertisers say content marketing has directly led to winning new business.



Ready to connect with business decision makers and raise awareness for your company?



Scan QR code to learn more, or visit:
BizJournals.com/Supercharge