



## ***EBTC INFORMATION BULLETIN***

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***DATE: February 26, 2007***

***SUBJECT: WHTI***

***SOURCE: Toronto Star***

WASHINGTON—Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty says he believes all provinces and territories eventually will follow his lead toward more secure drivers' licences, providing a national movement toward a cheaper, more efficient way to enter the United States.

McGuinty made the remarks as he began three days of meetings here, seeking an alternative to a Bush administration policy that could require Canadians to carry passports at land border crossings as early as next January.

McGuinty, Manitoba Premier Gary Doer and New Brunswick Premier Shawn Graham will be meeting many of the 50 American governors gathered here for their annual meeting and will also be huddling with U.S. congressional allies.

The Ontario premier said regardless of the need for an alternative document acceptable to the U.S., everyone will be moving to more secure drivers' licences.

"You've got to stay ahead of the bad guys all the time," McGuinty said.

He said British Columbia is already on board, Doer appears to be on side and McGuinty predicted "all kinds of interest" from the other provinces and territories.

But if they cannot buy time, Canadian premiers run the risk of wasted money and effort if they cannot convince the Bush administration that high-security licences are the preferred alternative to mandatory passports at land border crossings.

Part of their mission here was to push members of Congress to kick the passport requirement down the line to June 2009, the outer limit allowed under an amendment passed by the last Congress.

The premier said the Ontario driver's licence would likely lead North America in providing "cutting edge" security features and he said he would work with Ottawa to find a way to have citizenship encoded in the licence.

A pilot project using enhanced drivers' licences is in effect at the British Columbia-Washington border and has the backing of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

McGuinty said he was seeing doors opening on this side of the border, citing last week's announcement by U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff that he would provide passport exemptions to children and teens travelling in groups with adult supervision.

A similar exemption is expected for seniors.

But there are critics here who believe Ottawa and the provinces are not properly preparing for a passport requirement from which the Bush administration will not back down and are putting too much hope in help from a Democratic Congress that campaigned last November on a promise to fully implement all the security recommendations of the 9/11 Commission report.

Paul Frazer, a former Canadian ambassador who is now a consultant here, says Washington and Ottawa should be aggressively marketing the need for passports jointly and taking action to make passports cheaper and easier to obtain.

He said there is nothing wrong with lobbying for alternative documents, but in the meantime "the law is coming down the track and border communities have to be protected."

Doer said Canadian jurisdictions have the ability to produce licences with security features that go beyond Washington's requirements.

"We want the time to get the technology right," the Manitoba premier said.

But the premiers are meeting U.S. governors at a time when they are balking at Washington's own plan to tighten security requirements on state drivers' licences – a measure known as Real ID – because of cost and the bureaucratic effort to put the program in place.

The American plan would standardize information on all U.S. licences, including a digital photograph, a signature and machine-readable security features.

States would have to verify citizenship and, without the cards, Washington would be able to bar people from boarding airlines or entering federal buildings.

Already, Maine has said it will opt out and 21 other states will debate resolutions that could kill their participation or amend the rules.

Doer said that means the time is right for provinces and states to work together to buy more time to try to come up with licences with common security features.

McGuinty also he would not lobby the federal government to extend the life of the Canadian passport to 10 years from five, bringing it in line with the U.S. and most European nations and essentially cutting the \$87 cost in half.

A passport renewed every five years is more secure, McGuinty said.