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Resolution # 901-120913

Sponsor – Canada/US Relations Committee

**Resolution to Encourage Canada and the United States to Expedite
Preclearance Agreements Under the Beyond the Border Initiative**

Whereas, the Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference (CSG/ERC) is comprised of the 11 Northeast states from Maine to Maryland, US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and five eastern Canadian Provinces; and

Whereas, expedited customs clearance for U.S. and Canadian citizens traveling between the U.S. and Canada is in the best economic interest of both nations; and

Whereas, current customs procedures for citizens traveling between the two countries are often cumbersome and time-consuming, and can cause significant travel delays; and

Whereas, CSG/ERC has long been a proponent of preclearance initiatives under the bilateral Beyond the Border agreements; and

Whereas, several of these initiatives are currently under review by the U.S. and Canadian governments but have yet to be fully implemented; and

Whereas, customs clearance for passenger rail service between Montreal and New York City is cumbersome and time-consuming, and can cause significant travel delays; and

Whereas, customs preclearance in Montreal for passengers traveling on Amtrak's Adirondack line would reduce delays and serve as a first step in improving and expanding passenger rail service in general in the Eastern U.S. and Eastern Canada, such as reinstatement of the Vermonter line to Montreal; night trains that could reach Boston and New York; and improved system connectivity between Amtrak and VIA Rail; and

Whereas, U.S. customs preclearance at Toronto's Billy Bishop Airport would serve to expand opportunities for travel between Toronto and smaller airports in the U.S. that do not host currently CBP facilities; and

Whereas, easing customs clearance on inland waterways would go a long way to facilitating cross-border travel and trade and spurring economic activity; and

Whereas, on October 2, 2013, CSG/ERC Canada – U.S. Committee leadership wrote to the heads of U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Canada Border Services Agency urging agreement on pending preclearance programs,

Therefore be it resolved that CSG/ERC strongly encourages U.S Customs and Border Protection and the Canada Border Services Agency to move quickly to expedite agreements under the Beyond the Border initiative to permit customs preclearance of Amtrak passengers at Montreal’s Central Station and Toronto’s Billy Bishop Airport and to ease customs clearance on inland waterways bordering our two countries.