



Not all Canadians can get through U.S. customs

By **Bob Boughner**, Chatham Daily News
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It shouldn't come as a surprise that border security is becoming more stringent.

In 2012, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers inspected more than 350 million travellers to the U.S. and arrested nearly 7,700 people wanted for serious crimes at U.S. ports of entry.

Every year, thousands of Canadians travel to the U.S. for work, vacation, business and pleasure.

However, Canadians are subject to the Immigration and Nationality Act of the U.S., which contains several provisions related to criminal records and admission to the U.S..

Specifically, the Act renders inadmissible foreign nationals who have been convicted of a controlled substance violation or who have been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude.

The most recent statistics from Justice Canada indicates that about 600,000 Canadians have criminal records for the comparatively minor offence of marijuana possession. All of these Canadians can potentially be denied entry into the U.S. at the border.

Any Canadian who has been convicted of such crimes must obtain a non-immigrant waiver from CBP. Such waivers generally take six to eight months to obtain and so they should be applied for well in advance of a planned entry in the U.S.

Companies like **Pardon Services Canada** can help individuals with the U.S. entry waiver and/or record suspension application process.

With respect to granted Canadian pardons, now known as record suspensions, **Pardon Services Canada** indicates that the U.S. government does not recognize them. Therefore, even if an individual has successfully obtained a record suspension, sealing their criminal record, it is still accessible at any port of entry because the CBP database contains information regarding foreign criminal convictions. A Canadian pardon will not seal the record for border crossing purposes. A U.S. entry waiver must be obtained.



