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FEELING BLEU

U.S., Canadian cheesemakers caught in Trump's tariff dispute

Michael Collins USA TODAY

GREENSBORO, VT – On Mateo Kehler's family farm, at the end of a dirt road about an hour from the Canadian border, the cheesemaking starts before darkness lifts over the pastures and pines of northern Vermont. • A truck with fresh milk from cows that graze in nearby fields rumbles toward Jasper Hill Farm's big blue barn, painted with a mural of a starry nighttime sky and a blue-cheese moon. An American flag stretches over the entrance. • Two hours to the north, in a small, leafy, French-speaking village, Jean Morin steps into the former Catholic church he bought for 1 Canadian dollar and turned into part of his cheese factory. The pungent smell of aging cheese fills a temperature-controlled room as Morin surveys shelves holding hundreds of wheels of the fromage he produces at the old rectory next door. • Kehler's and Morin's cheesemaking businesses sit on opposite sides of the United States-Canada border. But both are feeling the same pain of the tariff war between the United States and Canada.

"The reality is that there's nobody that is winning," Kehler said. "Everyone in these border communities is losing."

Kehler, who co-founded Jasper Hill Farm with his brother Andy, worked for a decade to penetrate Canada's highly regulated dairy market to sell his artisan cheeses north of the border. He had finally made inroads and was looking to expand when President Donald Trump slapped tariffs on billions of dollars' worth of Canadian products, including cheese.

Canada retaliated by placing tariffs on U.S.-made cheese as well as hundreds of other American goods. Trump inflamed the tensions with a barrage of insults and suggestions that Canada become the 51st state.

All of a sudden, Kehler said, Canadians were no longer interested in buying American-made cheese.

"The inflammatory rhetoric and the backlash absolutely killed our (Canadian) market overnight," he said. "And it hasn't recovered."

In Quebec, Morin and his neighbors in Sainte-Élizabeth-de-Warwick, halfway between Montreal and Quebec City, felt the sting of Trump's tariffs and taunts. Trump's outbursts and punitive measures forced Morin into a difficult decision. He stopped exporting the cheeses he produces at Fromagerie du Presbytère to the United States. The tariffs, he said, made it too expensive.



ABOVE: Vermont's Jasper Hill Farm was purchased by brothers Mateo and Andy Kehler in 1998. TOP: Due to the tariff war between the United States and Canada, Jean Morin, founder of the Fromagerie du Presbytere in Quebec, has halted sales across the border. PHOTOS BY JASPER COLT/USA TODAY

"I'm closer to Vermont than Vancouver, Toronto," Morin said. But right now, he said, the border separating the two countries feels like "a big wall in China."

For cheesemakers on both sides, "it's a terrible moment," he said.

A passion for cheesemaking

Morin, a fourth-generation dairy farmer, grew up in a small house across the street from the church he turned into part of his cheese production center.

See CHEESE, Page 3A

Democrats to hold the largest ever majority in CT Senate

Mark Pazniokas
THE CT MIRROR

The names, salaries and top leaders of the new General Assembly are settled, but most committee assignments and other details key to how business will move at the Capitol are a work in progress as the legislature prepares for the arrival of 39 new members and even more lopsided Democratic majorities.

Legislative salaries will increase in the two-year term that begins on Jan. 6 by 3.6% in 2027 and 3.2% in 2028, a consequence of a bipartisan bill passed in 2022 that pegs pay to a federal measure of wage growth, the Employment Cost Index. The first raise pegged to the index came in the 2025-2026 term.

See DEMOCRATS, Page 3A



Debate continues in the House of Representatives on the last day of the regular session on May 6.
STEPHEN BUSEMEYER/CT MIRROR

Grants available to promote tourism in eastern CT

Beth McDermott
Norwich Bulletin
USA TODAY NETWORK

Businesses, nonprofits and municipalities across eastern Connecticut can apply for matching grants of up to $10,000 to promote tourism through the Eastern Regional Tourism District's 2027 Regional Marketing Partnership Program.

The program has $80,000 available for its eighth year, according to a community announcement. Applications are due by 5 p.m. Jan. 8, 2027.

The grants support tourism marketing projects throughout the district's 41 cities and towns, with an emphasis on partnerships that bring visitors to the region.

Businesses, nonprofit organizations and municipalities are eligible to apply for one-to-one matching grants of up to $10,000.

See TOURISM, Page 2A

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