



February 13, 2024

Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
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Honourable Dominic LeBlanc
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Dear Honourable Ministers,

We are writing today to highlight the need for increased funding and resources in Budget 2024 to the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to address the urgent need of increasing the number of frontline CBSA officers, ensuring these officers have the proper working tools and facilities to do their jobs, and to request additional facilities for a new CBSA training centre in Windsor, Ontario.

The last decade has presented increasing challenges for our border officers. Since the former government significantly cut resources to CBSA, officers on the frontlines now work harder, with less staff, tools and resources, to do their jobs effectively. From increased trafficking of all types to asylum seekers coming in record numbers, and now automotive thefts across the country being shipped through the ports, additional supports and resources can no longer wait.

To better protect our communities, the priority of the government should be increased staffing. The Customs Immigration Union (CIU), representing our CBSA officers, estimates that we currently lack as many as 3,000 border officers across the country. This means that border crossings are consistently operating with reduced staff who just do not have the time, means or support to effectively search for illegal firearms, contraband, stolen vehicles and work with asylum seekers.

Moreover, these same officers are being moved around the country to handle critical needs, leaving important gaps in border services elsewhere. Yet at present, hiring rates barely cover normal attrition. Travelers face frustrating delays, and the officers are in a never-ending cycle where current forces are stretched too thin and are completely exhausted. **It's time to do better for our officers.**

CBSA officers lack the proper tools to do their jobs. For example, for train operations, there are no facilities or equipment and not enough resources to complete rail examinations. At marine facilities, mainly in Ontario, where much of the border falls on waterways, it is next to impossible to keep track of the comings and goings. On the most recent concerns addressed about auto thefts — namely at the Port of Montreal — the on-site space available for officers to perform expected inspections is severely limited, and there are

only eight officers to search the containers intended for exports. This is to say nothing of the broken x-ray scanner at the Port, which has resulted in a scanner having to be sent from Windsor, taking away from officers in the Southern Ontario region. This is shameful and unacceptable.

Proper tools are only part of the solution. To use the tools, we need to hire the people and train them. CBSA is currently limited by the number of officers it can train at its College in Rigaud, Quebec. Part of the solution to fixing our border lies in opening new training facilities. This is where it would make sense for the government to consider opening a training facility for officers in Windsor, Ontario – at the busiest border crossing in the country.

From past discussions we know there have been limited number of Duty Firearm Courses (for both new recruits and recertifications for officers) offered in the past. I understand that requests have been submitted from arming managers in Windsor to CBSA requesting investment in Windsor facilities that highlight the basic needs to set up such a facility. Overall, this training centre – even if established as a pilot project – would at minimum increase the number of CBSA graduates while still facilitating qualifications of officers from all over Ontario.

After decades of cuts to our border services, and with ever-increasing workloads for our officers, it is absolutely vital that the Government starts increasing funding to CBSA to properly staff and provide the necessary resources to protect our borders and Canadians. CBSA officers can no longer wait for additional resources and staff, especially after having worked so diligently in recent pandemic years on the frontlines. Budget 2024 provides an opportunity to deliver on these needs.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this important matter. We would be happy to meet to discuss these concerns with you further.

Yours truly,



Brian Masse MP (Windsor West)
NDP Industry, Border and Automotive Critic
Vice-Chair, Canada-US Inter-Parliamentary Group



Mark Weber, National President
Customs and Immigration Union



Peter Julian MP (New Westminster-Burnaby)
NDP Public Safety Critic and Canadian Heritage
NDP Deputy Critic for Finance