



The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Le Comité sénatorial permanent de la sécurité nationale et de la défense

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Canadian Security Guide Book 2007 Border Crossings

*A Report of the Senate Committee on  
National Security and Defence*

**CONTAINS 10 NEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

Border crossings between Canada and the United States have placed far too much focus on collecting customs revenues and not nearly enough focus on keeping people and goods out of Canada that endanger Canadians. All governments love a little extra revenue. But this federal government and its predecessor have both missed opportunities to buy Canadians a lot of security by forgoing what amounts to small change in the world of taxation.

Revenue from customs tariffs accounted for about three-quarters of the Government of Canada's national revenue before income taxes were introduced in 1917. By 2004, the amount customs officers collected in duties from travellers entering Canada accounted for only 0.147 percent of national revenue.

If the federal government really needs that 0.147 percent, it has a multitude of other ways of raising the money, which would allow border guards to guard our borders.

To do that, officers are going to need better equipment, better systems and better thinking from politicians and bureaucrats about the proper use of border crossings as tools to counter criminality in general and terrorism in particular.

This report recommends measures that would:

- Raise the personal exemptions of persons re-entering Canada to \$2,000 a trip and coordinate exemption levels with the United States
- Improve electronic technology available to border officers to allow them to quickly identify persons and vehicles of interest who may require extra scrutiny
- Move much more quickly to arm border guards – a transition that is currently set on a painfully slow ten-year timetable
- Put into place measures to prevent border running at Canada's ten most used border crossings by the end of 2008, and all crossings by 2010
- Negotiate property swaps with the U.S. government so Canadian and U.S. border officers can pre-clear persons and vehicles entering their country *before* they cross a bridge or enter a tunnel (to prevent would-be terrorists from damaging crossing structures vital to each country's security and economic well-being)
- Improve documentation required to enter Canada and move quickly to standardize such documentation with U.S. authorities
- Greatly increase staffing at border crossings over current plans to hire only an average of 54 new officers a year over the next five years – a number likely to cause a critical shortage for a variety of reasons outlined in the report
- Discontinue the practice of hiring part-time staff (usually students) and giving them responsibilities commensurate with full-time staff, despite the fact that they have no experience and little training
- Ensure that all staff are properly trained for the use of new equipment
- Require the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) to develop a much more reliable and credible system for reporting critical incidents

The Committee has had some success in encouraging this government and the previous government to improve security at Canada's border crossings. Our previous recommendation to either post RCMP officers at border crossings or arm guards, for instance, will be instituted under the plan to arm guards – although far too slowly for our liking.

It is our hope that the current government will push bureaucrats to move much more quickly than they are at present to introduce other reforms to improve the security of Canadians. Border crossings are ideal locations to put a damper on criminal activities. For a government clearly advocating stronger measures to assure law and order in Canadian society, border crossings should be ideal places to make relatively small investments and receive a significant return.

The lack of urgency with which both the federal government and the federal bureaucracy are addressing these opportunities – do not seem commensurate – to this point – with the interest the current government has professed in creating a safer, less violent Canada.

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The report is available online in the “Reports” section of the Committee’s Web site, [www.sen-sec.ca](http://www.sen-sec.ca).

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