



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

**CLOSING POINTS-OF-ENTRY AND LOCAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICES
CONTRADICTS HARPER GOVERNMENT'S CLAIM OF SECURITY PRIORITY**

OTTAWA, APRIL 28, 2011 – The Customs and Immigration Union (CIU) which represents Canada's Front-Line Customs and Immigration Officers as well as all Immigration Inland Enforcement and Hearings Officers has denounced the Canada Border Services Agency's (CBSA) decision to eliminate local intelligence centers and to close and reduce hours of operation at five(5) land-border points-of-entry in Quebec and one(1) in Saskatchewan effective April 1, 2011.

The decision was announced by CBSA some months ago as part of its 'Strategic Review' to reduce spending and since that time the Union, and many others, have tried to demonstrate to the Government that these closures and reductions were unwise, unnecessary, and contrary to the Governments claimed priorities of enhanced intelligence-led Canada-US co-operative border security and to combating human smuggling. The closures also contradict actions taken by US authorities on the contiguous points-of-entry which, for their part, remain fully open.

CIU National President Ron Moran expressed the profound disappointment of all the Officers he represents.

"Although we've had a good working relationship with this Government since 2006, these recent decisions to simply rubber stamp CBSA's avoidance of operational activities are now compromising the Government's own border security priorities."

"We are told that combating human smuggling and working co-operatively with the US on border facilities are this Government's priorities yet closing and reducing hours of operation at these locations in Quebec and Saskatchewan was done unilaterally by CBSA without any form of consultation with anyone. Worse, the RCMP 2009 IBET Report has identified unguarded roads in Quebec as the greatest vulnerability to the proven increased human smuggling into Canada from the United States yet CBSA's response with these closures is to create five(5) more unguarded roads in this province."

"How does increasing Canada's vulnerability to human smuggling, ignoring our cross-border partners in decisions about contiguous land-border points-of-entry, and reducing our local intelligence capacities square with what Canadians are being told this Government stands for?"

The rationale offered by CBSA, and repeated by Public Safety Minister Toews, is that these closures will generate 'savings' of approximately \$5M annually. In response to this, the CIU provided both CBSA and Minister Toews with alternative non operational savings that were exponentially greater, but these alternatives were ignored and the closures and reductions have gone ahead nonetheless.

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“The CIU has identified spending efficiencies within CBSA long before the Strategic Review but our advice has been ignored. That is the prerogative of the Minister but that is not the same thing as saying there was no choice. Approving these closures and reductions is particularly alarming when we learn that the Auditor General discovered that \$50M of border facility funding was used to distribute non security related improvements in the riding hosting the G-8 meetings. Perhaps if border allocated funds were used for border related purposes, these points-of-entry and local intelligence centers would be remaining open.”

CIU National President Moran urged the Government to take action and suspend CBSA's decisions.

“Through the recently announced perimeter agreement, we know that Canada and the US are currently engaged in a joint review of border facilities management and the enhancement of intelligence capabilities which are both clearly logical and overdue initiatives. Accordingly, we urge the Prime Minister to announce the suspension of these closures and reductions and consider how best to proceed once that review is complete.”

“The Harper Government has previously prioritized effective border security over bureaucratic indifference which is why their acceptance of these counterproductive decisions is so alarming. Hopefully that leadership will once again be demonstrated in concrete actions and not just words; this is what Canadians deserve.”

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The **Customs and Immigration Union (CIU)** is a component of the **Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)**, which represents Canada's Front-Line Customs and Immigration Officers. CIU also represents Investigation, Intelligence and Trade Customs Officers, Immigration Inland Enforcement and Hearings Officers, as well as all support staff – all of whom work at the **Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA)**.

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