



**NATIONAL
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FEDERATION**

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Recommendations for Improved Canada/U.S. Border Security

Over the month of January, the National Police Federation (NPF) hosted discussions with Canadian and United States (U.S.) police and public safety union counterparts to ensure the voices of those serving on the ground would be considered in ongoing border discussions. These discussions brought together representatives from organizations such as the National ICE Officers Association, New York State Troopers Police Benevolent Association, Vermont Troopers' Association, Ontario Provincial Police Association, Association des policières et policiers provinciaux du Québec, and Canada's Customs and Immigration Union (CIU).

The primary focus of these meetings was to share insights from those directly involved in securing the Canada-U.S. border and to collaboratively explore solutions to enhance border safety and efficiency. Topics included illegal migration, human trafficking, drug and firearms smuggling, and other critical cross-border issues. These discussions emphasized the need for improved information sharing and deeper cooperation, and enhanced resources to ensure an integrated and effective approach to border security while addressing both immediate and long-term challenges.

NPF Recommendations to the Canadian and U.S. Governments

The NPF and its U.S. and Canadian union counterparts are encouraged by recent funding announcements by the Canadian government as well as the release of a border security plan, including Canada's \$1.3 billion commitment to enhance border infrastructure, disrupt fentanyl smuggling, and improve operational coordination. Ongoing initiatives like the Cross-Border Crime Forum (CBCF), the Beyond the Border Action Plan, and joint enforcement task forces are significant steps forward. However, as transnational crime evolves, additional measures are required to strengthen security, improve collaboration, and address emerging challenges.

The NPF recommends the following actions:

1. Streamline the procurement process of new technologies and equipment to ensure expedited availability.

Given that criminal activity is constantly evolving, the governments of Canada and the U.S. must adopt more agile procurement processes to swiftly respond to changes in criminal trends and behaviors. The current procurement process, often slowed by red tape, hampers the ability to act quickly in acquiring necessary tools and technology, such as drones, helicopters, and other critical equipment. When it comes to Canada specifically, it is recommended that a review to streamline its procurement processes to ensure a more nimble and responsive approach is conducted. By making these changes, Canada can enhance law enforcement agencies' ability to combat emerging threats effectively and in a timely manner.

2. Expand fully integrated specialized units to promote information sharing, collaboration, and joint enforcement.

Canada and the U.S. have many examples of successful integrated units that combat cross-national crimes such as the Cross-Border Maritime Law Enforcement Operations and the Canada-U.S. Enforcement Strike

Force. In order to combat firearms, and drug smuggling, human trafficking, and illegal migration, both countries need better coordination to create and strengthen fully integrated specialized units comprised of U.S. and Canadian agencies. Ensuring that information is shared regularly amongst the plethora of agencies is of utmost importance. In addition, while cross-border information sharing is important, information sharing amongst Canadian public safety agencies must also be strengthened to ensure the efficient flow of information. Discussions between the NPF and its counterparts centred around how information can often be siloed which hinders timely and appropriate information sharing between each country's own public safety agencies, but also between agencies working cross nationally. Addressing the siloing of vital information is paramount to the continued success of integrated cross-national units.

3. Better utilize the Cross-Border Crime Forum to guarantee an alignment of security and law enforcement initiatives.

The Cross-Border Crime Forum (CBCF) provides a critical platform for collaboration, but its potential remains underutilized. To address border security challenges more effectively, the forum should implement clear action items and accountability mechanisms. Convening at least twice annually would ensure ongoing alignment of security efforts and allow for the timely review of evolving threats. Furthermore, both governments must develop and maintain coordinated, well-funded border security plans that are regularly updated and informed by the CBCF's discussions. These plans should integrate advanced technologies, enhanced infrastructure, and adequately trained personnel to create a more resilient border security framework.

4. Address current police staffing issues and create long-term staffing plans by either recruiting more police or finding innovative ways to utilize their current shared resources to prioritize the mental well-being of public safety personnel.

Police staffing shortages not only impact operational effectiveness but also place a significant mental health strain on officers, especially during emergency deployments. When personnel are stretched thin and forced to cover multiple shifts or high-demand areas, officers often find themselves away from their families and support systems for extended periods, which leads to heightened stress and emotional exhaustion. In the long run, this mental strain can diminish officers' ability to perform their duties effectively and safely. If these issues aren't addressed, the short-term staffing solutions will only exacerbate the mental and emotional challenges faced by officers, ultimately undermining the overall efficiency and safety of police operations.

Information Sharing and Cross- Border Cooperation

The Canada-U.S. border, spanning nearly 9,000 kilometers, is the longest international border in the world. With around 400,000 people crossing daily, it is a vital economic and security corridor, requiring close cooperation between the two countries to ensure the safe and efficient movement of goods and people. The strong defense and security relationship is built on shared goals, such as combating violent extremism, child exploitation, cross-border smuggling, firearms violence, and cybersecurity threats.

During the meetings, the NPF and its counterparts discussed the critical role of consistent, real-time information sharing in addressing key border security challenges such as cross-border smuggling—whether involving people, firearms, or drugs—and the complexities of related investigations. Existing initiatives like the Marine Security Enforcement Teams, Integrated Cross-Border Maritime Law Enforcement Operations (Shiprider), Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBET), and Border Technology Program have demonstrated the potential for effective cooperation.

For example, the Shiprider program allows Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) officers to jointly enforce each other's laws while respecting national sovereignty. The program demonstrates how resources and intelligence sharing can enhance border security.ⁱ However, these programs often lack consistent integration and stable funding, which limits their impact.

A key takeaway from the discussions was that truly integrated, regularly occurring information-sharing efforts—not just those prompted by critical incidents—are essential for achieving measurable results. By fostering collaboration and leveraging partnerships, law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border can more effectively address the complexities of cross-border crime. The NPF and its counterparts remain committed to advocating for long-term solutions that prioritize stable funding and greater integration across border initiatives.

The Need for Enhanced Resources

One recurring theme during the discussions was the lack of sufficient resources to meet current and future border security challenges. Both Canadian and U.S. agencies face increasing demands with limited personnel, outdated technologies, and constrained budgets. Enhanced investments in personnel, technology, and infrastructure are crucial to support the mandates of border enforcement agencies on both sides of the border.

Police staffing shortages have become a critical issue in many areas, leading to increased strain on emergency response operations. In situations where personnel deployment is required to manage urgent demands, other units often bear the brunt of the pressure, leading to overworked officers and a lack of resources for other policing operations. This short-term solution, while necessary in some cases, is not sustainable in the long run. Without addressing the root causes of staffing shortages through better recruitment, retention, and support, police departments risk creating a cycle of exhaustion and inefficiency that ultimately harms both officers and the communities they serve.

Resource gaps have a cascading effect, hampering efforts to combat firearms, drug, and, human trafficking, and illegal migration. Addressing these gaps requires long-term commitments from both governments to provide the necessary funding, tools, and support for law enforcement to operate effectively.

Addressing Firearms Smuggling

Firearms smuggling remains a critical issue at the Canada-U.S. border, fueling organized crime. The majority of illegal firearms in Canada are smuggled from the U.S., the world's largest manufacturer of small arms. Between 2019 and 2023, 26,145 firearms were recovered in Canada and traced back to the U.S.,ⁱⁱ while the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) seized 4,234 firearms during the same period.ⁱⁱⁱ While national data on gun crimes have not been released, much of this violence is linked to organized crime, which saw a 53% increase going from 8,519 incidents in 2019 to 13,056 in 2023.^{iv} Alarming, almost half of shooting homicides in 2022 were confirmed or suspected to be tied to organized crime. Emerging threats, such as ghost guns, exacerbate the problem by creating untraceable weapons.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the NPF and its counterparts underscored the need for enhanced cross-border information sharing. While programs like the IBETs and partnerships between the RCMP, U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and ICE have made strides in addressing this issue, the lack of sustainable funding and comprehensive integration limit their effectiveness.

The discussions emphasized that real-time intelligence sharing, advanced tracking technologies, and sustained cross-border cooperation are essential to dismantling trafficking networks and reducing gun violence. Both governments must prioritize investments in these areas to ensure public safety.

Combating Drug and Human Trafficking

Illicit drug and human trafficking remain critical challenges at the Canada-U.S. border that undermine public safety and fuel organized crime. The opioid crisis, driven by fentanyl, has devastated communities, and traffickers exploit vulnerabilities in border security to smuggle drugs and people across the border. In 2023, U.S. CBP seized approximately 55,000 pounds of illicit drugs along the northern border, with cocaine accounting for nearly half of these seizures (approximately 27,000 pounds). By 2024, illicit drugs seized reduced dramatically to approximately 11,000 pounds.^v In Canada, the CBSA seized nearly 165,000 pounds of illicit drugs in 2024, up from close to 140,000 pounds in 2023 at the U.S. border.^{vi} These numbers underscore the scale of the problem and the ongoing efforts to combat it.

On the human trafficking front, cross-border networks operate with alarming sophistication, exploiting vulnerable individuals, often for forced labour or sexual exploitation. Existing joint operations and initiatives, like the Integrated Border Enforcement Teams, have shown promise. However, discussions highlighted the need for consistent funding, advanced technology, and real-time intelligence sharing to dismantle trafficking networks effectively.

Tackling Illegal Migration

Illegal migration remains a pressing issue at the Canada-U.S. border, with both countries facing evolving challenges in addressing unauthorized border crossings. The RCMP, CBSA, and their domestic and international partners work together to intercept individuals who enter Canada illegally. In 2024, U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported 23,721 encounters along the northern border, more than double the previous year.^{vii} The Swanton Sector, which includes Quebec's border with New York and Vermont, consistently reports the majority of encounters, with 82% occurring there in 2024, up from 69% in 2023 and 48% in 2022.^{viii ix} Policy and political changes in both Canada and the U.S. have contributed to these changes in migration patterns, including stricter U.S. immigration policies and Canada's ongoing reforms to its immigration and asylum systems.

Both countries recognize the need for better coordination and resource investment to manage illegal migration. Canada has taken steps to bolster border enforcement by increasing federal personnel by 350, alongside investments in surveillance technology such as drones, towers, helicopters, and K-9 teams. These measures aim to reduce the strain on enforcement activities and strengthen border security.^x

The NPF and its U.S. and Canadian counterparts stressed the importance that these measures must be complemented by enhanced intelligence-sharing and targeted resource allocation to disrupt transnational organized crime groups involved in illegal border crossings.

ⁱ 2024. Canada-U.S. Shiprider [online] Available at: [Canada-U.S. Shiprider | Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#)

^j 2024. Firearms Trace Data: Canada - 2018-2023 [online] Available at: [Firearms Trace Data: Canada - 2018-2023 | Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives](#)

ⁱⁱ 2025. Canada Border Services Agency enforcement action statistics [online] Available at: [Canada Border Services Agency enforcement action statistics](#)

^{iv} 2025. Police-reported organized crime, by most serious violation [online] Available at: [Police-reported organized crime, by most serious violation, Canada \(selected police services\)](#)

^v 2025. Drug Seizure Statistics. [online] Available at: [Drug Seizure Statistics | U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#)

^{vi} 2025. Canada Border Services Agency enforcement action statistics [online] Available at: [Canada Border Services Agency enforcement action statistics](#)

^{vii} 2025. U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) - Nationwide Encounters. [online] Available at: [Nationwide Encounters | U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#)

^{viii} 2025. U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) - Nationwide Encounters. [online] Available at: [Nationwide Encounters | U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#)

^{ix} 2024. CBC. U.S. border patrol reports record number of encounters with migrants at the Canadian border [online] Available at: [U.S. border patrol reports record number of encounters with migrants at the Canadian border | CBC News](#)

^x 2025. Securing the Canada-U.S. Border: Actions and Outcomes to Date. [online] Available at: [Securing the Canada-U.S. Border: Actions and Outcomes to Date - Canada.ca](#)