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# The Evolution of the Customs Profession and Institution in Canada, 1988–2018: From Customs Inspector (CI) to Border Services Officer (BSO)

Hubert Duchesneau

*The policy paper From Customs Inspector to Border Services Officer discusses how significant political, economic, security, and migratory events of the 1988–2018 period have shaped Canadian border policies, significantly widening the scope of the Customs mandate and ultimately changing the nature of the border. The paper offers the unique perspective and insight of a seasoned border management practitioner, having served regionally as front line officer, nationally as director in policy roles, and internationally as Canada's senior border services representative at the European Union (EU) in Brussels. It examines the transformation of the customs institution and culture as a result of the creation of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) in 2003; and the arming of front line officers in 2006. Finally, the paper explores the evolution of the customs profession and its practices, notably how the recruitment and training of front line officers developed to support these institutional and cultural transformations.*

## Introduction

The border management environment has evolved rapidly in the last thirty years. The Canada–US Free Trade Agreement in 1988, the coordinated terrorist attacks on the USA in 2001, operations for welcoming 25,000 Syrian refugees in 2015 and 2016, and new emerging threats such as the COVID pandemic have all increased the need to adapt Canadian border policies and the customs institution and profession, including, importantly, the recruitment and training of Customs and border management frontline professionals.

The Customs Inspector (CI) role became Border Services Officer (BSO) in 2003 with the creation of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA); economic, public safety, and national security responsibilities were added to the original fiscal role. Border management work is increasingly carried out ahead of the physical border to better identify and manage risks and requires international Customs cooperation, private sector partnerships, and interagency and intergovernmental collaboration at both local and national levels.

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Moreover, the Canadian Customs administration has experienced in less than 10 years (1999–2006) three major institutional transformations: first, evolving successively from the Department of National Revenue, Customs and Excise into a semi-autonomous agency competent in both customs and tax issues in 1998; second, in 2003 from the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) towards an integrated border management organization, the CBSA, part of the Government of Canada's Public Safety portfolio; and finally, in 2006 while the agency was still consolidating into the CBSA, the implementation of the government's decision to equip front-line Border Services Officers and other enforcement officers with a duty firearm (approximately 7,000 officers), signaling a real cultural shift for an administration dating back to Confederation.

Using a chronological approach, this paper is divided into five parts. Part one puts the article into the context of customs and border management research and education in Canada covering the period of 1988 to 2018, notionally from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to the Canada-USA-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA). The second part discusses how significant political, economic, security, and migratory events from 1988 to 2018 have shaped Canadian border policies, significantly widening the scope of the Customs mandate and ultimately changing the nature of the border. The third part examines the transformation of the customs institution and culture as a result of the implementation of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) in 1998; the creation of the CBSA in 2003; and the arming of front-line officers in 2006. The fourth part explores the evolution of the customs and border management profession, notably how the recruitment and training of front-line officers developed to support these institutional and cultural transformations. Finally, the fifth part provides a case study of the CBSA International Liaison Officer Cadre (ILO)—a new border management role—with an exploration of how the '*pushing the border out*' approach is made operational in the field to secure and facilitate international travel and trade flows.

## Part 1. Context

The article fills a gap in the scholarly literature related to Customs and border management in Canada and the unprecedented evolution of its profession and institution between 1988 and 2018. Despite dating from Confederation in 1867, and despite its presence in most parts of Canadian territory given the extent of its mandate, the Customs administration is paradoxically one of the least known federal departments.

Numerous publications dealing with the Canada-US border and border security policies post-2001 have appeared. For instance, in *Border: Canada and the U.S.*

*and Dispatches from the 49th Parallel* (2003), James Laxer examined the changing nature of the Canada-US border, the national identities question, the idea of continentalism, and the lives of the people on both sides of the border. Meanwhile, Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, in *Borderlands: Comparing Border Security in North America and Europe* (2007), provided a comparative analysis of eleven border security policies in seven states in North America and Europe, including Canada, on the impact of human activities on both sides of these borders.

In *Border Security, Trade and Travel Facilitation* (2010), Geoffrey Hale and Christina Marcotte studied the challenges the 2001 terrorist attacks pose for the Canadian government in terms of border management policies. Conversely, the documentary series *Border Security: Canada's Front Line* (2012–2014) contributed to better educate the Canadian public about the broad enforcement mandate of the CBSA in terms of customs, security and safety, irregular migration, and tax laws. From a historical point of view, Dave McIntosh in *The Collectors: A History of Canadian Customs and Excise* (1984) "tells the story of those people who have written Customs history from Confederation to the end of the 70s".

This article offers the unique perspective and insight of a seasoned border management practitioner during the period from 1988 to 2018, having served regionally as Customs inspector, nationally as trainer, manager, and director in both trade and enforcement capacities, internationally at the World Customs Organization (WCO), and as Canada's senior border services representative at the European Union (EU) in Brussels. Although the article is aimed primarily at Customs and law-enforcement practitioners, it will also be an invaluable tool for legislators, academics, and researchers interested in public administration regulatory and enforcement organizations, customs and border management administrations, international trade facilitation, and border security practices. It could also be of interest for historians and policy and decision makers interested in the evolution of the Canadian Customs profession, institution, and operating model.

## Part 2. Impact of Political, Economic, Security and Migratory events on Customs and Border Management Policies, 1988–2018

### The 80s: The collector and gatekeeper years

In the 1980s, Revenue Canada, Customs and Excise was a tax collector, a protector of economic Canadian interests against the injurious effects of dumped imported goods, and a critical player in combatting Customs fraud and drug enforcement. Customs' priority was the fiscal mandate (revenue collection including Customs and excise duties, sales and excise taxes) and de facto,

enforcement of highly taxed smuggled goods such as alcohol, cigarettes, tobacco, and jewellery. Revenue Canada, Customs and Excise regulated traveller and goods flow at points of entry (PoE), at the land border, in airports, marine ports, railway stations, and mail processing centers. Front-line Customs inspectors (CI), as described by Widdowson (2006), were gatekeepers. The border was then a line of demarcation between two countries, punctuated by POEs. Travellers' and goods' admissibility was determined through a verbal declaration for the traveller and a paper declaration for the importer at the PoE.

Given the cross-border nature of its activities, Customs had an important international dimension. In the 1980s, Customs and Excise had an office in Brussels, Belgium and was active at the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC, which it joined in 1973), where it contributed to the development of simplified and harmonized customs procedures worldwide. It also had teams of anti-dumping investigators in both Brussels and Tokyo fighting against unfair competition to Canadian industry. To take an analogy from the World Customs Organization (WCO) *Customs Orientation Programme for Policy Makers* (1994), it was the time of "*Customs for Customs*", a Customs organization based on a legal rationale, giving priority to processes over results (see Table 4 for a comparison between the management of Customs in the 1980s vs. the 21st century). The international trade policies of Canada in the 1980s were aimed primarily at maximizing the advantages offered by an open border. This period was marked by major national and international changes which would shape Customs and international trade practices for many years ahead. On the national front, the *Charter of Rights and Freedom* in 1982 and a new *Customs Act* in 1986—the previous one dating from Confederation—were adopted. On the international front, the adoption of the *GATT Valuation Code* in 1985 replaced the *fair market value* (FMV) used until then to determine the Customs value for taxation purposes. 1988 saw the introduction of the international *Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System* (HS) of the CCC, which itself transformed into the WCO in 1995. The HS combines in a single integrated instrument the descriptions required for Customs tariffs, statistical nomenclatures, and transport classifications. Nowadays, the HS is used by 98% of global trade.

In *Border Security, Travel and Trade Facilitation*, Geoffrey Hale and Christina Marcotte (2010) highlight two other major changes which have contributed to significantly shaping border management policies in Canada, namely: the economic deregulation of the trucking industry which expanded from the US to Canada in the 1980s and the *Canada-US Free Trade Agreement* (CUSFTA) in 1988. Those changes opened the doors to trans-border trade by trucks; the rapid increase in use of multimodal containers accelerated

the integration with marine transportation of goods in trucks and rail networks. Customs operational decisions were guided by the *Customs and Excise Statement of Operating Principles* (1985). The Statement was based on "the principle that the vast majority of its public is willing to comply with the law, when informed, and when the law is applied in an equitable, uniform and responsive manner" (Customs Inspector, Customs and Excise Canada Bulletin 1985). Thus, the emphasis in promoting compliance with Customs and Excise regulations was on education. To that end, Customs and Excise worked notably with trade associations, which in turn disseminated information to their members.

### The 90s: The free trade years

The economic role of customs saw increasing momentum in the 90s, as those years were marked by free trade agreements (FTA) and transformations in customs and trade multilateral institutions. Canada Customs and Excise thus contributes to economic development and facilitates investments and better access for Canadian businesses on international markets. In 1994, CUSFTA was extended to Mexico with the signing of the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA). The World Trade Organization (WTO) became the global successor to the *General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade* (GATT) in 1995. That same year, the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) became the *World Customs Organization* (WCO). The 90s were also characterized by the beginning of globalization. The international mobility of goods, people, capital, information, and technology was increasing steadily. This mobility benefitted both legal and illicit trade as criminals explored more integrated markets and the freer movement of people to transport goods, people, and money across borders. The preeminent illegal activities by organized criminal groups were tobacco smuggling and drug trafficking. Profits often served to finance other illegal activities such as the smuggling of firearms, the production and smuggling of synthetic drugs, and human trafficking.

In signing the *Canada-United States Shared Border Accord* in February 1995, the two governments committed to collaborate on a great number of border management projects, to promote international trade; facilitate the movement of people; fight against smuggling, drugs, the irregular movement of people, and the reduction of cost to the two governments and the public (Government of Canada 2015). International trade and tourism, the lifeblood of the Canadian economy, were prominent among the priorities of the government under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (1993–2003). Major initiatives such as *Team Canada* strengthened travel and border management collaboration efforts with US authorities aimed at the promotion of Canadian competitiveness in trade, international investments, and tourism. Those initiatives had a direct impact on

Canada Customs’ priority activities. Subsequently, the advent of electronic transmission and the increase in international trade volume and new logistical models such as ‘just in time’ (JIT) manufacturing, container transportation, and the development of express courier services opened the door for the *Customs Blueprint* (1998) and *Investing in the Future: The Customs Action Plan 2000–2004* (CAP).

### **The Customs Action Plan: Customs client services and risk management**

The Customs Blueprint and Action Plan (1998) “gives a new perspective and vision for border management and trade administration”. This approach is based on risk assessment and the principle of advanced information. Thus, Canada Customs was able to offer streamlined treatment to low risk travellers and importers, and focus its enforcement effort on travellers and importers presenting both known and unknown risks. In addition, it could impose administrative sanctions in case of infractions against the *Customs Act*, the *Customs Tariff*, and their implementing regulations. Those sanctions could also be imposed for infractions with regards to international trade agreements.

The notion of the ‘border’ also evolved in the 90s. Canada Customs expanded the border and the clearance points towards importer and exporter premises, thus implementing a post-clearance audit (PCA) system carried out by specialized auditors (AU, a professional category in the Canadian public service). Customs decisions are based on self-assessment, and compliance is achieved through transparency and relationship with the importer through published information, education, guidelines, and policy development. Customs dog handlers started using Labrador retrievers (less intimidating than German Shepherds as they often operate in crowds), and expanded their targets to the detection of explosives and currency. They were supported by intelligence officers and investigators based both in the regions and at headquarters. The end of the 90s was also shaped by important public administration reforms at the international level. In 1999, the Customs and Excise Department became, in the context of the New Public Management (NPM), Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), a semi-autonomous customs and tax agency attached to the department of National Revenue. The Canadian government was envisaging “a different public service”, inspired by the NPM, which advocated an organizational culture centered on private sector practices and an approach grounded in a managerial rationale rather than a legal approach. The overall objective focused on the following areas: service improvements—one-stop shopping, single-window access to services, single business registration numbers; operational efficiencies; integration of common corporate and program functions; savings reinvested in program enhancements and re-engineering initiatives;

streamlined operations and the elimination of overlap and duplication; business process improvements; common and shared databases for client information; and enhanced compliance—improved targeting of non-compliance, based on the theory that the same people and companies would be non-compliant across customs, goods and services tax (GST), and tax.

### **September 11, 2001: Tipping point towards more security at and beyond the border**

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 transformed border management policies in North America, and all over the world, overnight. Prior to that date, as Laxer underlines in *The Border: Canada, the U.S. and the Dispatches from the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (2003), the George W. Bush administration stated that the border environment had “relied heavily on two vast oceans and two friendly neighbours for border security”. The terrorist attacks and their aftermaths continue to dominate the Canada-US relationship and led to border security overshadowing trade and economic questions in border management. Shortly after, on December 12th, Canada and the US signed the *Smart Border Declaration*. The Declaration notably expanded border management cooperation practices, such as *integrated border enforcement teams* (IBET) at the local level including the CBSA, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), provincial police forces, and their American counterparts. At the international level, the terrorist attacks altered the way countries evaluate security threats. The line between national and international security became increasingly indistinguishable. The WCO, at the suggestion of the United States Customs and Border Protection Service (US CBP) and the CBSA, inter alia, developed and launched the Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework). The SAFE Framework provides baseline international standards to secure and facilitate global trade and heralds a new approach to risk management, Customs cooperation, and partnerships with the private sector.

In 2007, the *Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative* (WHTI) drastically changed the management of the Canada-US border. The WHTI requires all travelers, including US citizens traveling in the Americas, to show a valid passport, passport card, or other approved secure document to establish their identity and nationality in order to enter or exit the United States.

### **Beyond the Border Action Plan: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness**

Ten years later, a new border management policy, based on the ‘*pushing the border out*’ approach was adopted: *Beyond the Border Action Plan: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness* (2011). The Plan revolved around a security and economic competitiveness approach based on a common

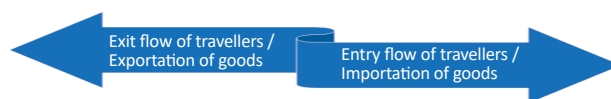


perimeter, where the two countries not only work at the border, but *beyond the border*, i.e., outside Canada. The approach was to seek to identify high-risk people and goods as early as possible in the supply chain continuum, using common risk assessment and the exchange of information and intelligence to collaborate against violent extremism, facilitate international trade, and fight against transnational crime. The Plan also aimed to strengthen collaboration on national security investigation, to improve protection and resilience of cross-border critical infrastructure and cyber-security, preparation for safety and health threats, and management of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear emergencies. Table 1 shows the evolution of the Canadian Customs mandate from 1988 to 2018.

Alan Bersin, United States Customs and Border Protection Commissioner (US CBP) from 2010 to 2015, described in “Lines and Flows: The Beginning and the End of Borders” (2012) a new vision of the border and its management. Bersin observed a paradigm shift in the perception of the border since September 2001: “[i]n today’s world, the border can no longer be considered a purely physical barrier which separates nation states but as the flow of people and the movement of goods on a global scale both legally and illegally” (390). Bersin proposes a two-pronged approach for its implementation: a risk and threat management approach based on advance information and, collaboration of all border agencies at the local, national, and international level. CBSA revamped its traditional risk management approach to “*pushing the borders out*” through the development and implementation of pre-screening, intelligence and enforcement agreements, and arrangements designed to interdict high-risk people, goods, and

conveyances at source. Underlying CBSA’s approach is the recognition that in an interdependent world, most of CBSA’s issues—transnational organized crime, terrorism, international trade, and others—can be addressed most effectively by working collaboratively with foreign governments, Customs and law enforcement agencies, the private sector, and other government agencies in a “whole of government approach”.

The arrows in Figure 1 show the international travel and trade flows managed by Customs and border agencies. Table 2 shows through the border continuum that Canada Customs work increasingly took place ahead of the border—abroad or beyond the border—to identify and manage risk as early as possible before it arrives at the physical border. *Advanced Passenger Information* and *Passenger Name Record* (API/PNR), *Advanced Commercial Information* (ACI) and the CBSA National Targeting Center (NTC) were the fundamental tools to support the fight against terrorism and organized crime on one hand and the facilitation of international travel and trade on the other. The continuum also stretched inland to carry out post-clearance audits at importers’ premises. By working effectively across each dimension of the continuum, Customs officers could control who and what had the right to enter and exit, and under what conditions.



**Figure 1. International Travel and Trade Flows Managed by Customs and Border Agencies.** Source: prepared by the author.

**Table 1. Evolution of the Canadian Customs Mandate from 1988 to 2018.** Source: prepared by the author, adapted from Duchesneau (2019, 13–14).

	1980s	1990s	2000–2018
<b>Revenue Collection</b>	Revenue collection at importation (Customs duty, Excise duty, Sales Tax, Excise Tax)		
	Enforcement of Customs and tax fraud		
<b>Economic/Trade Facilitation and Compliance</b>	Protect national economic interest against unfair foreign competition (tariff enforcement, import measures, quota enforcement, antidumping, etc.)	Promote economic development, investment and international market access of Canadian products	
		Ensure compliance with free trade agreements. Support business competitiveness, ensuring compliance with trade policies set by the WTO	
<b>Societal Protection, Health and Safety</b>  Customs administers more than 90 acts and international agreements on behalf of other government departments, provinces, and territories including international trade agreements	Protection of society (drugs, pornography, illegal immigrants, terrorists, weapons, diseased plants and animals, etc.)	Countering irregular migration	Fight against environmental and public health threats, consumer protection, cultural, and natural heritage
			Protect against risk of phytoparasites, invasive alien species
			Protect food safety, plant and animal health, and Canadian resource base
			New threats, opioid crises (e.g., Fentanyl) and other public health issues (e.g., Avian flu, COVID-19)

**Table 2. Border Continuum** Source: prepared by the author, adapted from Duchesneau (2019).

Abroad	At the Physical Border	Inland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities that occur prior to departure of people, goods, and conveyances abroad</li> <li>• Identify, mitigate and respond to threats and manage risks before they reach the physical border</li> <li>• Advanced Passenger Information / Passenger Name Record (API/PNR)</li> <li>• Advance Commercial Information (ACI)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities that occur at the physical points of entry (POE) and exit points in Canada</li> <li>• 119 land border crossings</li> <li>• 13 international airports</li> <li>• 20 International marine ports</li> <li>• 3 courier processing centers</li> <li>• 3 postal processing Centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities that occur in Canada</li> <li>• Post-clearance audits (PCA) at importer premises to decongest the border</li> <li>• National Compliance Plan where targeted verifications are determined through a risk-based, evergreen process</li> <li>• Removal of non-admissible persons</li> </ul>

### Part 3. Institutional Transformations

Canada Customs managed three major institutional transformations in less than 10 years (1999–2006). It evolved from a Customs, excise, and international trade administration—Revenue Canada, Customs and Excise—to a semi-autonomous integrated Customs and tax administration—the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency—part of the National Revenue Department in 1999. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, it became the CBSA in 2003, an integrated border management service, part of the Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness portfolio (now, Public Safety), along with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), and the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS). Moreover, in 2006, CBSA was tasked over a ten-year period to implement the *Arming Initiative*, aiming to equip 7,000 front-line officers with a side arm, train them, and ensure their qualification and certification. With this initiative, CBSA (Customs) became the second most important armed enforcement agency in Canada.

The extent of these changes in such a short period of time are unprecedented in the customs and border management institutional world. By comparison, the United Kingdom went from a Customs administration (HM Customs and Excise) to a Customs tax agency (HM Revenue and Customs, 2005), then a border agency in seven years without the organizational change and the arming of front-line officers at the same time.

Given the lessons learned by the experience of their Canadian and UK counterparts, the Australian Government gave itself one full year to implement the Australian Border Force in 2015, regrouping the Customs and immigration enforcement functions into the Ministry of the Interior.

#### The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (1999): The New Public Management (NPM)

The customs institution as part of a semi-autonomous income tax agency lasted four years, from 1999 to 2003. The transition from department status to that of an agency was facilitated in 1994 when the two

departments were merged by legislation into one department: Revenue Canada. Administrative consolidation brought together the 14,000 full-time equivalent employees in Customs and Excise and the 25,000 in Taxation. During that short period, Customs seized the opportunities that agency status had to offer. It notably benefitted from remuneration flexibility for front-line managers (MG for management group) and for attracting some specialist roles, such as auditors, in high demand across the private and public sector. The upgrading of the front-line personnel function allowed, among other things, the development of the *CCRA Dictionary of Competencies* (2015), which is still current in 2018. Regional Customs operations also obtained more influence over national decisions as the five regional heads (assistant commissioners), were appointed at the assistant deputy minister level and reported directly to the Commissioner at headquarters.

On the administrative integration front, CCRA presented several advantages for what were now ‘clients’, particularly large enterprises, which were no longer subjected to three audits at three different times (a customs audit, an income tax audit, and an excise audit). Incidentally, the Excise function remained with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) following the reassignment of Customs to the CBSA in 2003. Then, the main challenge was to make the voice of Customs heard, including issues of an operational organization employing many officers at border areas removed from large urban centres. Yasui (2009) argued that a totally integrated revenue organization faces numerous challenges. The integration process has been described as “mating [a] terrier with [a] retriever” due to different historical, cultural and functional bases (10).

#### Limitations of the New Public Management (NPM) for customs and border management

As Customs and tax administrations from Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, among others, implemented NPM, Malcolm K. Sparrow (2000), both a Harvard professor and UK law enforcement practitioner, set the limitations of this approach. Sparrow argued that the NPM does not consider the distinctive characters of law enforcement organizations, such as Customs administrations, in terms of client services and



performance measurement. He maintains that based on the US Customs Service modernization experience, enforcement organizations must not only provide client services, but also enforce obligations. Thus, they support social policies which do not lend themselves well to performance management based on quantitative indicators.

Sparrow’s work contributed to shaping the development of border management practices in Canadian customs for years to come. Central to Sparrow’s work is the *raison d’être* of enforcement and social regulation organizations, namely: the mitigation and control of risks and inherent threats of cross-border flows of goods, people, and means of transportation for health, public safety, and the environment. Sparrow stresses the enormous benefit to society that might accrue from the development of risk management as a core professional skill for regulators. Per Sparrow, regulatory and enforcement practices must achieve three main goals: “controlling risks, solving problems, managing compliance”. As such, a regulatory organization must invest in advance information and collaborative partnerships, and develop performance measurement notably focusing on results but also on outcomes and impacts.

**The establishment of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) in 2003: “One face at the border”**

Shortly after the creation of the US Department of Homeland Security in 2002 and the border management administration known as United States Customs and Border Protection (US CBP) in 2003, the CBSA—first part of the new Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness department (and now Public Safety Canada)—was established on December 12, 2003. Some 9,352 employees from the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), 1,037 from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) intelligence, interdiction, and enforcement program (port of entry program), and 108 officials from the Canadian Food Inspection

Agency (CFIA) import inspection at Ports of Entry program were transferred instantly to the CBSA.

The formation of the CBSA allowed the Government of Canada to install an integrated response to all manner of emergencies and threats to Canadian security and public safety, whether they were health-related, natural disasters, or terrorists. The addition of the enforcement and intelligence components of immigration enabled the CBSA to conduct business such as screening visitors and immigrants for war crimes, crimes against humanity, terrorism or security issues, organized crime and money laundering, and document fraud. Moreover, the CBSA was now able to proceed with investigations, detentions, audiences, and removals in the context of irregular migration enforcement. As a result, new border management roles were created, including international liaison officers (ILO) working abroad (ahead of the border), targeting officers, and criminal investigators. Tables 3 and 4 show the evolution from a centralized department to a semi-autonomous integrated border management agency in terms of its management and the development of policies.

**Customs and border management: A recognized profession in Canada**

The transition from a semi-autonomous Customs and tax agency to an integrated border enforcement agency was drastic. In an interview carried out in 2018 in the context of the 15th anniversary of the CBSA, Alain Jolicoeur, first CBSA president from 2003 to 2008, relates that the Thursday preceding the announcement of the creation of the CBSA, he was still deputy minister at the former Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (now Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada). Four days later, he was busy setting up a new integrated border management organization from the ground up: “[a]t 15:00 hours that day we had around 7,000 employees at CBSA and operational (...). It was a drastic change of orientation and

**Table 3. Managing Customs in the 1980s vs. in the 21st Century** Source: prepared by the author, adapted from Duchesneau (2019).

	<b>Managing Customs in the 1980s Legal Based Rationale “Customs for Customs”</b>	<b>Managing Customs in the 21st Century Management rationale based on New Public Management (NMP)</b>
Legitimacy	Based on the stability of formal structures and regularity of procedures	Based on adaptation to change and action effectiveness
Service	Citizen	Client
Accountability	Accountability of processes	Accountability based on results
Thinking mode	Linear <i>Legal logic</i>	Iterative <i>Effectiveness and action logic</i>
Organizational culture	Hierarchical	Delegation
Performance Management	On the respect of rules	On results and outcomes
Administrative structures	Centralized, Department	Semi-autonomous, Agency status

**Table 4. Evolution of the Customs Institution and Supporting Border Management Policies** Source: prepared by the author, adapted from Duchesneau (2019).

	<b>Customs and Excise Canada (C&amp;E) 1867–1999</b>	<b>Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) 1999–2003</b>	<b>Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) 2003–Present</b>
Department/ Ministry	Customs and excise administration part of the National Revenue Department	<i>Semi-autonomous</i> Customs and tax agency part of the National Revenue Department	Integrated border management agency part of the Public Safety Portfolio  Integrate border management functions from three different departments: Customs and trade from CCRA, immigration intelligence and enforcement from CIC, Food, Plant and Animal Inspection from CFIA
Policy	Statement of Operating Principles (Customs Inspector 1985)	<i>Customs 2000: A Blueprint for the Future and Action Plan</i> (1998)	<i>Beyond the Border Action Plan: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness</i> (Government of Canada 2011)
	“The Department’s approach to the business as distinguished from the legal mandate”	<i>Investing in the Future: The Customs Action Plan 2000–2004</i>	“Addressing threats early; trade facilitation; economic growth and jobs; Cross-border law enforcement; and critical infrastructure and cyber-security”
	The International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (1974)	“An approach based on risk assessment and advance information”	<i>WCO SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade</i> (2005, 2018)
	<i>The International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS Convention)</i> (1983)		<i>Customs in the 21st Century, Enhancing Growth and Development through Trade Facilitation and Border Security</i> (2008)

philosophy for the Government of Canada, which has always put the emphasis on Customs and trade operations at the border. Suddenly, security became the priority, which required the reinvention of border operations” (Canada Border Services Agency 2018).

The main challenge was to establish an integrated border management agency out of a Customs and trade branch, part of a semi-autonomous Revenue Agency, an immigration enforcement branch, and a food and animal inspection division—and, at the same time, manage a 24/7 operational organization. This was often referred to in CBSA management circles as “replacing the wires while the lights are still on”. Among other initial challenges was the regrouping of employees, mandates, and cultures of three departments, described by Jolicoeur “as a wedding and three divorces” (Canada Border Services Agency 2018). They rapidly created a new professional group specific to border management (F/B for frontière/border) and a new title and role for front-line officers: Border Services Officer (BSO). This was the first time that Canadian government authorities recognized the specificity of the border management role in the federal government repertoire of professions. In 2010, a new uniform and a new heraldic badge representing the three legacy organizations were adopted.

#### **Arming of front-line officers: Institutional transformation or cultural revolution?**

The terms of the Harper Government (2006 to 2015) and the integration of CBSA into the Public Safety department gave birth to another institutional transformation, albeit a “cultural revolution”: the arming of front-line border services officers, except for those front-line officers working at airports. The 10-year Arming Initiative (2006–2016) had the primary objective: “to enhance border security and improve officers’ ability to pursue enforcement activities and handle and mitigate high risk situations by equipping designated frontline personnel with a duty firearm and associated training” (Canada Border Services Agency 2017, ii). The Northgate Group Report, *A View from the Front Lines—Officer Safety and the Necessity of Sidearms* (2006), commissioned by the Customs and Excise Union Douanes et Accise (CEUDA) was one of the main triggers of this cultural revolution. The report highlights the evolution of the Border Services Officers’ responsibilities which have since July 2000 included arresting violent and dangerous individuals and intercepting impaired drivers and criminal fugitives. This study proposed 31 recommendations to enhance officer safety and improve border security. It called, *inter alia*, for the following: “arm all border service officers involved



or potentially involved in interdiction or enforcement interaction with the public; create an armed border patrol; end work alone situations”.

As underlined by Steven Rigby (Canada Border Services Agency 2018), CBSA’s president from 2008 to 2010, “[t]he arming initiative was not frivolous. It was a significant and essential shift in the way the border is managed. It signaled how the CBSA would function in the future as Canada aligned its measures with those of Homeland Security”. The Union’s president Jean-Pierre Fortin (2017) concurred with him regarding the cultural change: “the role of the border officer has shifted dramatically over the years, now there is a heavy focus on national security, counter-terrorism and law enforcement, including intercepting impaired drivers, whereas the primary task was previously duty and tax collection” (Harris 2017). In addition, the Arming Initiative was implemented at the same time as another of the Northgate Group’s recommendations: The Doubling-Up Initiative in *Small and Remote Ports of Entry* aiming to ensure that at least two officers were on duty at each port of entry in Canada. This measure created more than 400 new BSO positions across Canada. The Initiative “was implemented as intended, [and] targets to train and arm the frontline workforce were achieved within the timeline and under the original budget”. After the Arming Initiative concluded, over 6,492 officers were trained and armed, exceeding the initial target of 4,800 officers. At this juncture, there are insufficient data to determine if the requirement to carry a side arm has impacted the recruitment of representatives of certain communities or if this will have an effect in the long run on staffing specialized positions in certain border management areas which require a practical and operational experience.

#### **Part 4. A Unique Induction Training Curriculum for Integrated Border Management Front Line Professionals**

Canada Customs/CBSA demonstrated strong capacity for adaptation and innovation during these major institutional and cultural transformations. It swiftly and effectively adapted its Customs and border operating model, its work descriptions, and up-skilled and trained its officers to an expanding mandate and ever-changing border management environment. At the beginnings of their careers, BSOs now benefit from induction training and professional development to acquire these unique qualifications and skillsets. Since 1978, CBSA has a national residential training center (The College) in Rigaud, Québec, where the professional knowledge, skills, and values for integrated border management are developed. Prior to the creation of The College, training programs were fragmented and often provided only on a coaching basis. A short period of formal training varied in application from region to region. As the first College

Director Peter Harkness pointed out: “[p]rofessionalism was very much the overall objective of the training philosophy and we felt to be professional, one needed a good deal of classroom training—from the history of the Department right through the hands-on skills that are required to undertake the job of a Customs inspector or an auditor” (cited in Canada Customs and Excise 1980).

In order to facilitate the development of skills in an operational environment, Canada Customs created within The College: a mock land port of entry (POE) with primary inspection lines (PIL), the port of Rigaud; an airport area to process travelers; an outdoor space dedicated to the search of vehicles where cars of all ranges and sizes are available for secondary examinations; and a mock courtroom to practice court testimony. Nowadays, it also provides a platform to experiment with the use of the operational and intelligence systems first-hand and, with the Arming Initiative, state-of-the-art shooting ranges and simulation rooms. The CBSA National Officer Induction Training Program has evolved with each institutional transformation, contributing to building a sense of belonging in the organization and maintaining a solid organizational culture and an “esprit de corps”. The Program uses a blended learning approach and is built on three learning blocks: an introduction to the profession through distance learning, skills development through scenario-based simulations to assess performance at the learning center in Rigaud, and specialized training at the workplace where trainees are assessed using existing performance tools. In 1988, the Customs and Excise College launched the Customs Inspector Recruit Training Program (CIRTP), 18 weeks at the outset, then 12 weeks, to replace the two six-week Traffic and Commercial courses. The CIRTP has many new foundational features including competency and performance-based rationales, focusing on the development of operational skills through real-life scenarios and case studies. Trainee officers are assessed on their demonstrated capability, *inter alia*, to conduct interviews to determine admissibility of goods for examination, use technology to make informed decisions, carry out examination of vehicles, testify in court, etc. The CIRTP is also a pass-fail program where employment is contingent on successful completion of the program. Evaluations are done by superintendents and chiefs brought in from the field. From its inception, the CIRTP has been a flagship program in Canada and around the world. The Canadian model stands as one of the first customs competency and performance-based learning programs and is recognized as a good practice in the WCO Framework of Principles and Practices on Customs Professionalism (2015).

With the formation of the CBSA, CIRTP became the Port of Entry Recruit Training Program (POERT) in 2007, adding immigration and food as well as plant and animal inspection to the curriculum. Finally, it became the Officer Induction Training Program (OITP)

in 2012 with the addition of arming training as part of a 22-week program, including an online four-week orientation to the profession (Table 5). The recruitment and training of 400 new officers in the context of the Doubling-Up Initiative and the addition of side-arm training, combined with the replacement of a massive retirement of personnel hired at the end of the 70s, had a major impact on the training budget and thus on the delivery of other training and development programs of the Agency, notably commercial and management training. The CBSA Audit of Commercial Air Cargo (2014) highlighted the operational vulnerability of front-line officers not trained in a transportation mode that is growing and presents a high risk of smuggling of prohibited goods. The lack of commercial training combined with the loss of the bulk of the commercial experts, a trend exacerbated by the 2012 Deficit

Reduction Action Program (DRAP), created gaps in the Agency’s ability to address threats and vulnerabilities in the commercial stream.

### Part 5. A New Frontline Role: The International Liaison Officer (LO)

The International Liaison Officer (LO) Cadre, a new integrated border management role, is a prime example of the ‘*pushing the border out*’ approach, built on advance information, risk management, and cooperation at the national and international level. The International Liaison Officer Cadre stems from the CBSA International Customs attachés network and the Migration Integrity Officers (MIO) Network of Citizenship Immigration Canada (CIC). It includes approximately

**Table 5. Evolution of Canada Customs, Recruitment and Induction Training Program for Frontline Officers** Source: prepared by the author, adapted from Duchesneau (2019, 13–14).

	1980s	1990s	2000s
<b>FRONT LINE OFFICER TITLE</b>	<b>Customs Inspector (CI)</b> (PM / Program Management)	<b>Customs Inspector (CI)</b> CIC Migration Integrity Officer (FS/Foreign Service)	<b>Border Services Officer (BSO)</b> (Professional group FB Frontière/Border) <b>International Liaison Officer</b> (FB/Frontier Border)
<b>TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTION</b>	<b>Customs and Excise College</b>	<b>Revenue Canada Learning Center</b>	<b>Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) College</b>
<b>RECRUITMENT</b>	Local	Regional	National
<b>NATIONAL INDUCTION TRAINING PROGRAM</b>	Two courses: 6 weeks, Traffic 6 weeks, Commercial (1979) Customs Correspondence Course	<i>Competency and performance based Customs Inspector Recruit Training Program-CIRTP</i> (1988)  18 weeks at the onset 12 weeks 3 phases: Contextual Learning, Skills Training, Advanced	<i>Port of Entry Recruit Training-POERT</i> (2007)  12-weeks Core 9 weeks in-residence Online 1 week, In-Service Secondary 5 days each, mode specific, coaching  <i>Induction Officer Training Program-OITP</i> (2012)  <i>22 weeks: 18 weeks in residence and 4 weeks online</i>
<b>USE OF FORCE / ARMING TRAINING PROGRAM</b>	Advanced Communication Workshop including Dealing with Difficult People and Cultural Awareness (1986) 3-day workshop delivered to Customs Inspectors and Superintendents at local level	Provision of self-defense equipment to Customs Inspectors and Immigration Officers working at the border (1990)	Fully integrated in OTIP
<b>DETECTOR DOGS TRAINING PROGRAM</b>	Drugs, firearms, currency detection	Currency, explosives	
	Customs Detector Dogs (German shepherds)	Beginning of the use of detector dogs for agriculture matters i.e. (beagles)	



forty international liaison officers, international network managers, and international region directors posted in Canadian embassies and high commissions. Working in critical global centres (such as Washington, Brussels, and Shanghai) and approximately 30 international trade and travel hubs, the LOs are called upon to carry out a myriad of pre-border activities covering irregular migration, trade facilitation, national security, and Customs fraud. Supporting the ‘*pushing the border out*’ approach, LOs act as collectors of usable information at the point of embarkation abroad to assist the *CBSA National Targeting Center (NTC)* with interceptions and the development of risk indicators and targets. True border management diplomats, LOs play a pivotal role in coordinated border management (CBM) as they work collaboratively with foreign border management (Customs, Immigration, border guards), law enforcement agencies, and other Canadian government departments based in the host country. As part of their facilitation and security role, LOs educate international stakeholders about CBSA trusted travel and trade facilitation programs and provide training to partners such as airline staff and local Immigration, Customs, and police on fraudulent documents detection. Key actors in the fight against irregular migration and customs fraud, LOs assist with the coordination of removal operations of inadmissible persons and support Customs and criminal investigations. Finally, as stakeholders in

the management of international emergency crises, LOs work in close cooperation with OGAs and international partners during emergency crises such as natural disasters and migratory crises, within the context of the Global Affairs Canada (GAC). The Network notably intervened during the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and the 2006 humanitarian crisis in Lebanon.

During the Syrian refugee operation (2015–2016), the CBSA opened two temporary ports of entry (POEs), one in Amman, Jordan and another in Beirut, Lebanon, under the leadership of international network managers (INM) deployed in situ. They implemented a whole-of-government multilayer security screening process, tailored to the specific needs of the Syrian refugees. The LOs verified the identities of more than 26,000 refugees—and the validity of their documents using biometric information—by February 29, 2016. In addition, they provided their expertise in the detection of fraudulent documents and built on their knowledge of the airport environment to establish strong relationships with host countries’ airport employees and to facilitate the embarkation process in Beirut, Amman, Cairo, and Ankara. Finally, they have worked closely with Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Service Canada, and the Public Health Agency of Canada to develop arrival processes for refugees at the Toronto and Montréal international airports.

**Table 6. Evolution of Canada Customs International Presence** Source: prepared by the author, adapted from Duchesneau (2019, 27–28).

	<b>1980s Customs and Excise, National Revenue</b>	<b>1990s Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA)/Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)</b>	<b>2000s Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA)</b>
Posts	Brussels and Tokyo	Brussels	Brussels, Washington, and Shanghai, and more than 40 travel and trade hubs around the world
Titles	Customs Attachés (professional group PM for program administration)	Customs and Revenue Counselor or Attaché	Counsellor Border Services/ Regional directors in Brussels, Washington, and Shanghai (Professional group EX for executive)
	Anti-dumping investigators (professional group CO for international trade/commerce)	Migration Integrity Officer (MIO) (1989) (professional group FS for Foreign Service)	International liaison cadre: International Liaison Officer, International Network Manager (Professional group FB for Frontière / Border)
Functions	Representation before the Customs Cooperation Council (1973) in Brussels in the development of harmonized and simplified Customs procedures for trade facilitation	CCRA: Representation before the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on tax issues	Integrated border management: representation before the WCO and hosted country, information collection, fight against irregular migration and customs fraud, support to investigations, fraudulent documents detection training, stakeholder’s education on trade and facilitation programs, emergency crises management
	Enforcing trade remedies that help protect Canadian industry from the injurious effects of dumped and subsidized imported goods	CIC: Fight against irregular migration	

## Conclusion

As Widdowson argues in "The Changing Role of Customs: Evolution or Revolution?" (2010), the mandate, the border, the institution, the profession and working methods have evolved significantly due to evolutionary factors such as globalization, international trade liberalization, New Public Management, and revolutionary factors including the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the arming of front line BSOs in Canada. Canada Customs and Excise transformed in less than 10 years into an integrated border management agency, the CBSA, responsible for the facilitation, control, and enforcement of the flow of people and goods, and the second-largest law enforcement agency in Canada.

Multifarious by the extent and variety of its responsibilities, CBSA contributes to Canada's fiscal, economic, public safety and national security objectives. Given its strategic position at the Canada-US border, in travel and trade hubs around the world, and in airports, seaports, train stations, the postal service, and express couriers, CBSA is uniquely placed to secure and regulate the flows of people, information (data), fiscal transactions, and goods, and to enforce more than 90 acts, regulations, and international agreements on behalf of other government agencies. No other public administration has such an exceptional position and the ability to play on so many levels. Singular in its versatility, the CBSA is also noteworthy in its field of operations that has extended abroad—ahead of the border and inland in Canada. Gatekeeper in the 1980's, CBSA now operates offshore using a risk-based, intelligence-informed approach and advance information to identify, mitigate, and respond to threats and manage risks before they reach the physical Canadian border. Borders are being 'pushed out'. Customs and other border formalities are carried out away from the border, electronically, before and after the actual border crossing at ports of entry.

The Customs Inspector (CI) role became Border Services Officer (BSO) in 2003 with the creation of the CBSA. It is now a recognized profession within the Canadian public service with its own occupational group—Frontier/Border (FB)—including roles such as intelligence analyst, targeting officers, senior trade compliance officers, inland enforcement officers, removal officers, and international liaison officers. Given the vast array of tasks they accomplish, border management professionals must have a unique skillsets supported by specialized learning, training, and development programs. They need to be relationship and network builders to cultivate productive strategic and operational relationships; critical thinkers and skilled analysts to make informed decisions; effective communicators both cross-culturally and with a range of

people and organizations; able to adapt to shifting and complex business needs; and above all, team players, including the ability to collaborate virtually. Based on trends observed at the international level, the mandates given to the now Canada Border Services Agency are bound to be extended over the next few years, notably in terms of public health, environmental protection, and the management of migratory and international emergencies and crises. The outlook of the border management profession is most promising. The number of front-line officers has more than doubled in 30 years, from 3,500 in 1980 to more than 7,000 in 2015. New roles and border management practices have been created, along with new challenges to face and overcome.

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