



Customs and Immigration Union  
Syndicat des Douanes et de l'Immigration

February 1, 2023

**BY EMAIL:** marco.mendicino@parl.gc.ca  
(original by mail)

Hon. Marco Mendicino  
Minister of Public Safety  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A6

**RE: CBSA's immigration detention system**

---

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you today to request a meeting at your earliest convenience to discuss the state of the Canada Border Services Agency's (CBSA) immigration detention apparatus.

As you're undoubtedly aware, recent news reports have cast a grim light on the immigration detention system, both from a human rights perspective and a public safety angle. It is becoming increasingly clear that, as the federal public safety agency responsible for conducting arrests and detentions under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, CBSA lacks not only a coherent plan for the future, but the very infrastructure needed to properly fulfill its mandate while ensuring the security of all involved. Urgent action is needed on your government's part to prevent an already flawed system from eroding further.

Particularly concerning for our members is the matter of immigration detainees held in provincial detention facilities. Currently, these provincial facilities, which differ from CBSA's Immigration Holding Centres (IHC) designed for low and medium-risk individuals, are mostly used to detain individuals with serious criminal charges and convictions, and who otherwise cannot be held in IHCs. However, three provinces — Alberta, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia — are to cease immigration detentions this year, with other provinces possibly following suit.

As the deadline looms — Alberta will be the first province to put an end to immigration detentions in June of this year — CBSA does not appear to have a plan in place to deal with the resulting logistical, financial, or public safety ramifications for the Agency, its officers, and the public at large. In discussions with CIU, CBSA upper management has made it clear that the Agency was still exploring options, although what these are, and how they are to be implemented in a timely manner, remains a mystery.

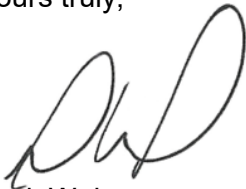
What's most troubling is that the initial announcements by the provinces go back to 2020. This means the Agency has had nearly three years to find a solution, with nothing to show for it. Existing IHCs, with open layouts and where guard duties are outsourced to private security firms whose staff is ill-equipped to deal with delicate situations, are entirely unsuitable to hold dangerous offenders. In cases of serious criminality, alternatives to detention are also difficult — if not outright impossible — to implement, due to public safety considerations.

Ultimately, detention should always be a last resort, and it is clear that new solutions are needed to address eminently valid concerns outside the public safety sphere. At the same time, the imminent end of immigration detention agreements by some provinces, and the lack of suitable alternatives on CBSA's part, risks triggering new, problematic public safety issues for our communities.

CIU members are proud of the work they do to protect our borders and I know they take to heart the safety and security of our country. They are keen on seeing your government act swiftly to address these questions.

I am sure you'll agree that these matters require urgent attention, and I look forward to meeting with you to discuss these important issues.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Weber', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Mark Weber  
National President

cc. (by email) Erin O'Gorman, President, CBSA  
Christopher Masotti, Executive Assistant, Office of the Minister of Public Safety