



EBTC INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Dangerous goods and people slipped into Canada earlier this year because of serious flaws at the country's border agency, federal Auditor General Sheila Fraser said in her fall report released yesterday.

The incidents happened right under the noses of border and port officials even though the people and goods had been red-flagged, according to the audit, which did not provide details on the incidents.

"We found that (the Canada Border Services Agency) does not capture enough information on the results of its activities to know whether it is doing a good job at the border or to know whether improvements are needed," Fraser told reporters.

The audit found an average of 13 per cent of high-risk containers and 21 per cent of high-risk individuals from January to March 2007 were not referred for further examination.

While critics said this finding was especially "alarming," Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day said the government is taking steps to improve the situation.

"There are always going to be times where something will get missed," said Day, who was quick to note that drug and gun seizures are up dramatically.

Fraser said an audit of the seven-year-old border agency found high-risk individuals and shipments continue to be missed because a new high-tech system "is not working as intended."

While she highlighted other shortcomings in government programs, including the lack of security clearance in the awarding of government contracts, she emphasized the ongoing problems at the border agency.

"The threat and risk assessments that the agency has put in place are not satisfactorily supporting its efforts to achieve a border management approach that is based on risk," she said in the review.

"Many of the issues identified in our audit have persisted since the 1980s under various organizational structures, as we have reported in the past."

That's despite the fact the agency has poured \$150 million into an automated system for identifying high-risk people and goods, the report said. Some 96 million people enter Canada annually – tourists, immigrants and so on – and about \$404 billion in imported goods.