

Unclassified

Deputy Minister China Committee
August 29, 2023
1:30pm to 3:00pm
125 Sussex Drive

Key Messages

- Canada acknowledges China's efforts to stem the flow and disrupt the production of illegal substances and their precursors globally. However, China remains a significant source of precursor chemicals used to produce fentanyl domestically.
- The Government of Canada takes its responsibility to protect Canadians from foreign interference seriously.
- While the RCMP continues to seek ways to mitigate and navigate the current reality of the Canada-China bilateral relationship, in order to progress on law enforcement issues of mutual concern, it does not envision renewing its expired Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) in the immediate future.

OUTLINE/OVERVIEW

You are scheduled to attend an in-person meeting with the Deputy Minister China Committee (DMCC) on August 29, 2023 from 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm at 125 Sussex Drive. The focus of the meeting will be on the following topics: Fentanyl as a Challenge in Canada-China relations, the Future of Canada-China Bilateral Relations, and a forward-looking discussion on proposed agenda items up to year-end. The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) will lead the briefing on Fentanyl, no advanced documentation was provided. Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has prepared a discussion paper and placemat to facilitate the discussion on the future of Canada-China bilateral relations, this was shared over the secure system. For reference, a notional DMCC and Cabinet calendar can be found at **TAB B**. Talking points have been provided at **TAB C**.

BACKGROUND

Fentanyl as a Challenge in Canada-China Relations

Canada is in the midst of an opioid overdose crisis, which has claimed the lives of over 36,400 Canadians since 2016. China has been a cause for concern with respect to opioids due to its position as a source country for precursor and pre-precursor chemicals used in the manufacture of synthetic opioids, including fentanyl. In an attempt to curtail this, from 2015 to May 2019, China implemented several controls to regulate over 116 new psychoactive substances, including fentanyl and fentanyl analogues. Moreover, in April 2019, China's National Narcotics Control Commission announced improvements to its process for scheduling fentanyl and related analogues. In 2021, China added 58 substances to its list of controlled drugs, including fentanyl. Despite these efforts, the CBSA has increasingly intercepted shipments in the courier and postal modes from China. INTERPOL has prioritized combatting fentanyl, and recently engaged Canada, the U.S., and Mexico to launch a new project focused on enhancing information exchange, intelligence sharing, and operational collaboration. Recognizing that China is a major producer and exporter of fentanyl and its precursor chemicals, INTERPOL aspires to engage Chinese law enforcement in this counter-fentanyl project.

Relations with China: Fall Agenda

In regards to moving forward with relations with China, several factors must be considered. From a global perspective, China can be seen as disruptive, globally impactful, and have interests that are wholly divergent from those of Canada. Canada will need to re-calibrate its expectations for bi-lateral relations with China and engage at a high-level in hopes of advancing Canadian values and interests. Canada's *Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS)* and *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (ANFP)* are two high-profile examples of how the RCMP will be implicated in Canada-China bi-lateral relations.

The DMCC Secretariat has presented a list of notional agenda items for the remainder of the calendar year as well as a potential list of "China literacy" topics in 2023-24. Members are invited to consider the potential topics and any that do not figure in this list but should. The Secretariat requests that input be shared with them directly or shared with the DMCC as a whole at this meeting. To note, there is currently a Public Safety briefing on the foreign interference inquiry and transparency registry, tentatively scheduled for the September 29th DMCC.

Allegations of foreign interference in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections have been the subject of heightened media reporting and public interest, and has prompted several parliamentary committee studies as well, including from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (PROC) and Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics (ETHI). The RCMP is involved in all of the above-described processes, and will support the potential processes or recommendations that may come out of a future public inquiry. The RCMP is part of the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force, which actively monitors election periods for signs of foreign interference, and participates in briefings to Government of Canada senior management, the Panel of Five, and to the campaign leaders of the various political parties, as required.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Fentanyl as a Challenge in Canada-China Relations

Political tensions between Canada and China have led to some obstacles in the RCMP's relationship with Chinese law enforcement. As a result, recent RCMP efforts to combat the flow of illicit fentanyl have not been met with the same level of engagement by the Chinese MPS. A Memorandum of Understanding that existed between the RCMP and the Chinese MPS since 2010 to prevent and combat crime expired in 2021. As a result, bilateral engagement with Chinese law enforcement is challenging for the RCMP.

Relations with China: Fall Agenda

Canada's evolving approach to China requires an updated strategic approach to bilateral relations, addressing the complexity of China's rise and full range of Canadian interests. The approach must measure success by tangible results rather than activity, considering reciprocity, and focusing on Canadian interests and values in our domestic, bilateral, regional, and multilateral relations with an increasingly influential China.

The RCMP's activities under the IPS would clearly signal Canada's continued commitment to work jointly with its allies and likeminded law enforcement partners in the Indo-Pacific region as it works to combat cybercrime and other high priority transnational threats globally.

As the RCMP is the only agency with wide-ranging authority for criminal law enforcement on waterways in the Arctic, including the authority to stop and board foreign and domestic vessels for compliance with Canadian laws, it will continue to be heavily implicated in the delivery of the ANPF's safety and security pillar. It is therefore essential that the RCMP develop its own strategy to position the organization to respond to the ANPF, as the government acts to prevent malicious actors from undermining our political, economic, and social integrity in the north.

This reality creates a need for the RCMP to develop a more strategic approach to the Arctic that is reflecting the breadth of its mandate, articulates goals, and identifies requirements and capacity gaps. As our domestic partners advance the government's Arctic policy priorities, we will see an opportunity for the RCMP perspective and voice to be heard.

Alignment across these initiatives and the approaches outlined in the placemat are paramount to ensure a consistent and coherent approach towards China.

The RCMP is aware that foreign actor threats and interference are being carried out in Canada, including the harassment of individuals or groups exercising their fundamental freedoms guaranteed in the *Charter*. Combatting and investigating foreign actor interference remains an operational priority for the RCMP. In relation to allegations of foreign interference targeting Canada's 2019 and 2021 federal elections, the RCMP did not conduct criminal investigations into the 2019 federal election, and does not have any criminal investigations underway concerning the 2021 federal election.