

MANDATE LETTERS



As Canada forms its next government, the Prime Minister's Office will be preparing ministerial mandate letters. In this special Intelligence Memo series, policy experts highlight key challenges and priorities in each minister's portfolio.

From: Lawrence Herman
To: The Incoming Minister of Foreign Affairs
Date: November 5, 2019

Internationally, Canada finds itself in a volatile and hostile world, where liberal democracy is under assault and much of the pre-existing political and economic order has been shattered. Erstwhile allies such as the United States have changed course. Global circumstances and events are uncertain.

With this as the context, as you embark on your term as minister, your top priorities should be the following:

- Continue to pursue the principles outlined in the House of Commons [speech](#) by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in June 2017 outlining the government's foreign policy priorities.
- In keeping on this trajectory, pursue measures that reinforce the strong points in Canada's bilateral relationship with the United States, cooperating in critical areas of mutual interest, with the immediate focus on approval and entry into force of CUSMA.
- Working with the Minister of International Trade Diversification, prepare the former Bill C-100 (the *CUSMA Implementation Act*) for re-introduction in the House of Commons.
- Use leverage gained in the NAFTA renegotiation to further cement strong relationships and linkages at all political and business levels south of the border.
- Notwithstanding the recent exchange of ambassadors, remain wary of China as a combative competitor, based on the principle that the relationship will not regain any semblance of normalcy while China holds two Canadians hostage and illegally threatens Canadian trade interests.
- Continue to balance our relationship with the US by actively enhancing political relations with key allies, including France, Germany, the UK and like-minded governments committed to liberal internationalism, a rules-based system, robust collective security and a low-carbon world.
- Advocate increased Canadian business participation in trade agreements with Europe (CETA) and the Asia-Pacific countries (Canada-Korea FTA and the CPTPP), as well as APEC and ASEAN, at the same time as pursuing stronger political and business ties with key Latin American countries.
- Maintain Canada's undiminished commitment to multilateral bodies, particularly the UN, the WTO, the IMF/World Bank and the other institutions as well as the G7 and G20.
- Continue to enunciate Canada's undiminished commitment to the environmental goals of the 2015 Paris Climate Accord as a key element in our foreign policy.
- Work with the Minister of International Trade Diversification, to ensure Canada's trade policy initiatives, including possible new FTAs and investment protection talks, are pursued with Canada's commercial interests front and centre.
- Collaborate with cabinet colleagues to energize Canada's National Shipbuilding Strategy, articulating the role strategic maritime assets play in executing foreign policy and sovereignty goals, including in the Arctic.
- Because of unprecedented cyber threats and the risks of Chinese and other state-owned enterprise investments in and theft of sensitive Canadian technologies, bring a renewed focus on security considerations to Canada's foreign policy goals and investment priorities.
- Continue to pursue Canada's global commitment to human rights, including voicing criticism of governments that are hostile to these freedoms, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, Venezuela and others.
- Continue Canada's condemnation of governments that endanger or threaten the sovereignty of others, including Russia vis-à-vis the Ukraine, Crimea and the Baltic countries and China vis-à-vis its aggressive policies in the South China Sea.
- Because of the extensive political capital involved with diminishing returns and modest chances of success, back away from Canada's goal to secure election to the UN Security Council.

Lawrence Herman is a former Canadian diplomat who practices international trade law at Herman & Associates. He is also a senior fellow of the C.D. Howe Institute in Toronto.

To send a comment or leave feedback, email us at blog@cdhowe.org.

The views expressed here are those of the author and do not reflect those of the Government of Canada or the C.D. Howe Institute, which does not take corporate positions on policy matters.