

CUSTC Meeting Minutes

Date: March 21, 2025

Time: 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

Location: Virtual Meeting

Agenda:

- Presentation by the Consuls General
- Q&A/Commentary Period
- Observations from Counsellors
- CUSTC Business

Presentation by the Consuls General

The current US political climate remains highly polarized on trade issues. While some regions are receptive to Canadian perspectives, others are resistant due to disinformation and political narratives.

Key points:

- In certain areas, trade discussions are met with hostility, while in others, there is openness to engagement. The US business community remains cautious about openly engaging with Canadian officials.
- Canada has been slow in effectively communicating its position on tariffs. This needs to change quickly. US businesses and associations need to be more vocal in advocating for stable trade relationships.
- Messaging and engagement strategies need to be aligned with US political language and priorities. Canada should highlight how economic harm to Canada directly impacts the US. Alternative approaches, such as emphasizing Canadian investment and tourism in the US, could help advance discussions.
- Mexico's diplomatic strategy in the US has been more nuanced and effective, providing a potential model for Canada.
- The concept of Canadian exceptionalism in the US is fading, shifting towards a more transactional relationship.

Observations from Counsellors

- The upcoming election period presents an opportunity for a strategic reset in trade discussions.

- Canada should institutionalize public diplomacy efforts in the US to counter misinformation and build long-term engagement.
- Global responses to US trade policies should be analyzed to inform Canada's strategy.
- The US is focusing on specific sectors—steel, aluminum, autos, semiconductors, etc.—leading up to April 2.
- PM Carney's view indicates that future negotiations will extend beyond trade into broader economic and security considerations.

CUSTC Business

- Review and discussion of communications plan.

Meeting Adjourned: 1:30 PM