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RCMP - OPENING STATEMENT

- Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me here today alongside my colleagues to speak about Bill C-37, which seeks to amend the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, as well as other related Acts.
- As this is my first time appearing at Committee, I will introduce myself and give you a little bit of background about my role at the RCMP. I am Acting Chief Superintendent Andris Zarins and I am the Director General of the Federal Coordination Centres and Covert Operations at RCMP National Headquarters. Part of my role is oversight of the Federal Coordination Centre – Serious and Organized Crime program activities.
- *The FCC Serious and Organized Crime* has functions and core responsibilities which include creating and maintaining partnerships with domestic and international law enforcement partners, other government departments and stakeholders to advance program priorities.

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- As we are all well aware, there has been a large increase of reported lethal and non-lethal opioid overdoses in Canada, which is why the changes being proposed in this Bill are important for the Canadian policing community to augment our response to this epidemic.

- Bill C-37 proposes a number of amendments to the CDSA that would support the Canadian law enforcement community in addressing the ongoing opioid crisis. Of particular interest for the RCMP, Bill C-37 proposes to:
 - accelerate the scheduling of substances;
 - streamline the disposition process for controlled substances and precursors;
 - create a registry for the importation of designated devices, such as pill presses;
 - extend the offences applicable to unauthorized activities involving precursors and other materials used in the production and trafficking of methamphetamine to all controlled substances; and,
 - provide the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) with the authority to open mail under 30 grams.

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drug market. It is the policing community's view that the additional enforcement measures proposed in this Bill will enhance our ability to combat these pervasive organized crime groups and networks.

- By providing the authority to the Minister of Health to rapidly schedule new substances that appear on the Canadian illicit market, police would be provided the ability to take criminal enforcement action against criminals and organized crime groups engaging in such activities, and therefore stem the distribution of newly identified illicit substances earlier.
- Additionally, the provisions of Bill C-37 allowing for the safe and timely disposal of dangerous substances are advantageous, as they will reduce the number of seized dangerous goods that are stored in police custody and the associated inherent risks and costs.
- Establishing a registry to control the importation of pill presses and related devices provides an additional tool to mitigate the domestic production of illicit tableting operations, which will be welcomed by the Canadian policing community.

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- Further, expanding the existing offences applicable to unauthorized activities involving precursors and other materials used in the production of methamphetamine to all controlled substances will provide Canadian police with additional tools when conducting investigations into the manufacturing of illicit substances, including those containing synthetic opioids, such as the various forms of fentanyl.
- Criminals and organized crime groups heavily depend on the postal stream to traffic contraband, including controlled substances. We have seen an increase in instances where small amounts are sent, due to the level of potency of some illicit substances, as well as to reduce the risk of detection and ensure successful delivery. Providing the CBSA the ability to open mail less than 30 grams will also assist in the ongoing fight against illicit synthetic opioids that are arriving through the international postal system.
- We know that criminals are also exploiting the domestic postal system to traffic illicit drugs. As such, the RCMP works in close collaboration with domestic partners and stakeholders, including Canada Post, to target and

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disrupt drug trafficking through the domestic mail, within Canadian legislative authorities.

- Federal Policing's approach to tackling the importation, production, and distribution of synthetic opioids by organized crime groups is heavily reliant on successful relationships with our domestic and international partners.
- To this end, the RCMP is working closely with CBSA, Canada Post and our domestic law enforcement partners to enhance information sharing and enforcement actions. We are also engaged with key international law enforcement agencies, such as the Drug Enforcement Agency in the United States and China's Ministry of Public Security, to address shared public safety threats, including those posed by synthetic opioids. Bill C-37 bolsters our work with international partners as it allows our international partners to see that we can have an impact on the illicit drug trade.
- Thank you again for inviting me to participate in your study of Bill C-37. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.