

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arts and culture are foreign policy assets. However, the Canadian government's interest in cultural diplomacy has been inconsistent over the years: initiatives have been undertaken to only then be phased out. Regardless, Canadian artists, writers and cultural organizations have themselves never stopped projecting the country's culture and arts internationally.



# Cultural Diplomacy

AT THE FRONT STAGE OF  
**CANADA'S  
FOREIGN POLICY**

This report presents the findings of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on the role Canadian culture and the arts should play in Canada's international relations.

**The main conclusion is that cultural diplomacy should be a pillar of Canada's foreign policy.**

Countries practice cultural diplomacy for many reasons. Such activities can generate support for a country's foreign policy priorities, improve mutual understanding and people-to-people ties, build trust for subsequent interactions, and advance matters of national interest.

The Committee's study emphasized that a diverse range of Canadian artists have garnered international recognition for the quality of their work and have helped to project a positive image of Canada internationally. However, testimony also indicated that, in the absence of consistent and strategic support from the Canadian government for cultural diplomacy, important opportunities have been missed. This finding can be explained by a number of factors:

- Arts and culture are an undervalued asset of Canadian foreign policy today.
- Federal roles and responsibilities for cultural diplomacy are currently fragmented, thus undermining their effectiveness.
- Federal funding devoted to the promotion of Canada's culture and arts abroad has been insufficient and inconsistent.

The Committee is of the firm belief that the full potential of cultural diplomacy – as a pillar of Canada’s foreign policy – has not yet been realized by the Government of Canada. Based on its conviction that the Government of Canada needs to make concerted efforts in this area, the Committee recommends:

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## RECOMMENDATION 1

**That the Government of Canada develop and implement a comprehensive cultural diplomacy strategy. It should establish the objectives of cultural diplomacy within the context of Canada’s foreign policy, articulate roles and responsibilities, and identify the budgetary resources necessary for the strategy’s realization.**

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The Committee also concluded that this cultural diplomacy strategy would benefit from clearly defined principles. The Committee has identified six:

- Projecting a modern image of Canada, including by taking full advantage of Canada’s leadership in innovation and creativity in the cultural sector.
- Identifying commercial opportunities for artists and cultural entrepreneurs in international markets.
- Taking a people-centred approach, in leveraging the talent of the artists and creators from across the country, especially emerging and young artists.
- Strengthening international collaboration based on the principle of reciprocity and the exchange of experience.
- Supporting innovative approaches to reflect the new modes of creativity that have resulted from technological advances.
- Ensuring that cultural diplomacy be entrenched as a priority within Canada’s foreign – and trade – policy.

In addition to the aforementioned principles, the Committee believes that the cultural and artistic dimensions of Canada’s foreign policy need to be enhanced and solidified through sound policy architecture.





A strategic framework for cultural diplomacy should be based on clearly defined goals and objectives. In turn, an ambitious, consistent and predictable level of investment should be attached to the achievement of those goals and objectives over the long term. As such, the Committee believes that the Government of Canada should work with provinces, territories and municipalities to leverage funding and maximize the impact of the federal role. With that objective in mind, the Committee recommends:

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### **RECOMMENDATION 2**

**That the Government of Canada explore opportunities for greater and more effective collaboration and coordination with provinces, territories and municipalities in its cultural diplomacy activities.**

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The Committee also believes strongly in the importance of performance measurement. As such, the Committee recommends:

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### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

**That federal departments and Crown corporations involved in cultural diplomacy activities develop performance measurement indicators to monitor and assess both the short-term and long-term results of those activities.**

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The Committee also determined that coordination of federal actions in the international promotion of Canadian arts and culture needs to improve. The Committee is calling for the development of a system that can enhance the consistency and the coherence of the decision-making process related to cultural diplomacy and that would consolidate government resources which are currently dispersed by and to various stakeholders. Given the fact that Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has the mandate to conduct Canada's international affairs and the associated expertise, the Committee believes that the department and its network of foreign missions should have the lead role in executing Canada's cultural diplomacy strategy. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

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### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

**That the Government of Canada designate Global Affairs Canada as the lead department responsible for coordinating and delivering Canada's cultural diplomacy strategy. The roles and responsibilities of other federal departments and agencies involved in the promotion of Canadian arts and culture should be clearly established in the strategic policy framework.**

### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

**That, two years after the tabling of this report, Global Affairs Canada provide the Committee with a status report on the Government of Canada's cultural diplomacy activities, with emphasis on those activities that supported Canada's foreign policy. The status report should be based on, but not limited to, performance measurement indicators.**



A scene from the Canadian Opera Company's production of Semele at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, 2015, photo: Jack Vartoogian/FrontRowPhotos



The Committee is of the view that Canadian diplomatic missions abroad could be a critical tool in the implementation of Canada's cultural diplomacy strategy. Furthermore, with respect to personnel, if it is to be treated as a priority within the Canadian government, cultural diplomacy must be reflected in the rank, training and selection of foreign service officers, as well as in their performance evaluation. Toward those ends, the Committee is recommending:

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### RECOMMENDATION 6

**That Global Affairs Canada enhance the capacity of Canadian missions abroad so that they have the skills, knowledge and tools necessary to support the federal government's cultural diplomacy initiatives.**

### RECOMMENDATION 7

**That Global Affairs Canada provide cultural diplomacy training to its employees, with particular attention on rotational employees posted abroad.**

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The Committee further believes that showcasing Canadian participation at international events, as well as organizing missions that curate Canada's creative enterprises, are among the promotional activities that could be instrumental in giving effect to Canada's cultural diplomacy strategy. Such activities serve to enhance the "discoverability" and competitiveness of Canada's creative sector, while also creating opportunities for collaboration and engagement with industry leaders and buyers from around the world.

Many witnesses described how digital technologies and social media have transformed the cultural chain of production and have created new spaces for international dialogue. The Committee views new technologies and digital inventiveness as opportunities to amplify people-to-people ties. Acting on this finding will necessitate that greater attention be devoted by the Canadian government to the potential impact of this sector in its foreign policy.

Finally, some witnesses focused on education as an important instrument of cultural diplomacy and diplomacy writ-large. In the past, Canadian studies programs were part of efforts to enhance knowledge and understanding of Canada abroad. The Committee determined that a new and modernized Canadian studies program could expand knowledge about Canada, and Canadian values, around the world. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

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### RECOMMENDATION 8

**That Global Affairs Canada support the creation of a modernized Canadian Studies program that would contribute to knowledge about Canada in the world.**

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**Overall, the Committee concluded that the work of cultural diplomacy could be carried out in a much more efficient, effective and strategic manner. The Committee's recommendations are therefore intended to ensure that the Government of Canada will invest in cultural diplomacy as an enduring pillar of Canada's foreign policy.**