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STRENGTHENING CANADA'S DIPLOMATIC CAPACITY IN AN INCREASINGLY TURBULENT AGE

**Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and
International Development**

Ali Ehsassi, Chair

**APRIL 2024
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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has the honour to present its

TWENTY-FIFTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied Canada's diplomatic capacity and has agreed to report the following:



STRENGTHENING CANADA'S DIPLOMATIC CAPACITY IN AN INCREASINGLY TURBULENT AGE

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (the committee) has studied Canada's diplomatic capacity, holding six meetings with witnesses between 29 November 2023 and 14 February 2024.¹ In so doing, the committee built on the work of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which conducted the first in-depth review of Canada's diplomatic machinery since the 1981 report of the Royal Commission on Conditions of Foreign Service.² According to the Chair, Senator Peter M. Boehm, the Senate committee's central finding was that Global Affairs Canada and the foreign service are fit for purpose, "but with several caveats."³ These are detailed in the resulting report, *More than a Vocation: Canada's Need for a 21st Century Foreign Service*, which contains 29 recommendations.⁴

During its study, this committee also had the benefit of reviewing the department's plan for transformation, which was put forward in a June 2023 discussion paper.⁵ The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mélanie Joly, outlined the context in which this document was written by conveying her assessment that Canada faces "a growing international security crisis."⁶ She warned that "the rules-based system that has kept Canadians safe for generations is cracking," and that, to meet the associated challenges, the government's foreign policy is being guided by two key principles: the defence of Canadian sovereignty and the pursuit of "pragmatic diplomacy."⁷ To succeed on the world stage, Minister Joly said, Canada must

1 House of Commons, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (FAAE), *Minutes of Proceedings*, 8 November 2023; and FAAE, "[Canada's Diplomatic Capacity](#)," *Work*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session.

2 [Royal Commission on Conditions of Foreign Service](#), Library and Archives Canada, 1981.

3 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 12 February 2024, 1610 (Peter M. Boehm, Senator, Ontario, ISG).

4 Senate, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, [More than a Vocation: Canada's Need for a 21st Century Foreign Service](#), December 2023.

5 Global Affairs Canada, [Future of Diplomacy: Transforming Global Affairs Canada – Discussion paper \(June 2023\)](#), June 2023.

6 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 February 2024, 1705 (the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs).

7 Ibid.



have eyes and ears on the ground. That is, diplomats who are “diverse, bilingual, healthy and well equipped.”⁸

The plan to transform Global Affairs Canada is based on four pillars: investing in Canada’s diplomatic workforce; increasing Canada’s diplomatic presence in key regions and multilateral institutions; enhancing Canada’s foreign policy expertise; and strengthening the department’s internal processes, including in relation to cyber security.⁹ It was necessary to undertake such a frank assessment of Global Affairs Canada and outline an ambitious path forward, Minister Joly said, because the work of reforming the department had “not been done in decades.”¹⁰ This rationale was echoed by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, David Morrison, who remarked that Canada’s foreign service had been allowed to “atrophy” while the global security environment deteriorated.¹¹ Gone are the years, he said, in which Canada can operate from the position of being “blessed by geography and by globalization.”¹²

It became clear to the committee that the reference point for scrutinizing Canada’s diplomatic capacity, and determining how to strengthen it, should not be some notion of a “golden age” in Canadian foreign policy, whether that be the years following the Second World War or the end of the Cold War. The world has changed in fundamental ways. This reality was captured in the committee’s report on the implications of the return of major war to Europe, following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which is entitled “The Wake-up Call.”¹³ Confronting this new era begins with the recognition that Canada has less room to manoeuvre and must work harder to achieve its objectives in a context where there are 193 United Nations member states, compared to the 51 that founded the organization in 1945.¹⁴ This larger world is being shaped by the expectations of new economic powers, the pressures of regional assertiveness, the rise of authoritarianism, the tensions of strategic competition, the disruption of new technologies and state-backed threats, and the stresses of climate change.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 1710.

10 Ibid., [1805](#).

11 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 February 2024, 1830 (David Morrison, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development).

12 Ibid.

13 FAAE, [The Wake-up Call: The World After February 24th 2022](#), 44th Parliament, 1st Session, 14th report, April 2023.

14 United Nations, [Growth in United Nations membership](#).

Regardless of any specific foreign policy approaches that Canadian governments may pursue, the committee was reminded of the “paramount” importance of Canada’s relationship with the United States.¹⁵ It was impressed on the committee that this relationship is an enduring geographic reality and will always be “preponderant” for Canada because the United States is “our partner in trade, our ally in defence and security and our co-steward in managing our shared environment.”¹⁶ Furthermore, the committee was told, Canada’s “influence abroad hinges on our perceived access in Washington and our understanding of Americans.”¹⁷ Decisions made in Washington also shape the broader foreign policy context given the role the United States has played in leading the West and guaranteeing the international order in which Canada has operated since the Second World War.¹⁸ Recognizing the importance of this role is not, however, to suggest that Canada’s foreign policy is one-dimensional. Rather, Canada’s bilateral relationship with the United States, the committee heard, should be balanced “with an active multilateralism aimed at creating norms and rules.”¹⁹

As a member of the G7, G20, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, among other international institutions, it is the Government of Canada’s view that Canada is part of “almost every table that matters.”²⁰ Nevertheless, witnesses noted that Canada must navigate the new strategic landscape as a country that comprises “just under one-half of 1% of the world’s population,”²¹ and that relies heavily, as a trading nation, “on a well-functioning, stable and open international order” for its prosperity.²² The challenges are formidable because the landscape itself—the committee was told—is “less hospitable to [Canada’s] interests and values than perhaps at any time since the end of the Second

15 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 11 December 2023, 1105 (Balkan Devlen, Director, Transatlantic Program, Macdonald-Laurier Institute, As an Individual).

16 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 11 December 2023, 1215 (Colin Robertson, Fellow, Canadian Global Affairs Institute).

17 Ibid.

18 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 13 December 2023, 1645 (Stéphane Roussel, Full Professor, École nationale d’administration publique, As an Individual).

19 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 11 December 2023, 1215 (Colin Robertson).

20 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 February 2024, 1825 (David Morrison).

21 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 29 November 2023, 1735 (Adam Chapnick, Professor, Defence Studies, Canadian Forces College, As an Individual).

22 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 11 December 2023, 1105 (Balkan Devlen).



World War.”²³ The world has become “messier, meaner and multi-centred,”²⁴ and is necessitating adaptation to “permanent turbulence.”²⁵

Despite the sense of being at the beginning of a new era of international relations, whose contours are so dynamic and contested that it has not elicited an agreed upon name, the committee was reminded that the Government of Canada had fallen out of the regular practice of conducting the kind of reviews that result in a published foreign policy. Defence and development policies were delivered in 2017²⁶ (the former of which was updated as the committee was finalizing this report²⁷), an address was given to the House of Commons on Canada’s foreign policy priorities,²⁸ and a dedicated strategy on the Indo-Pacific region was released in 2022.²⁹ However, Canada’s last comprehensive foreign policy document was the 2005 International Policy Statement.³⁰ Even with the pieces that have been put in place since, it has appeared to many that a foundation is missing, on which Canada’s relationships, positions, activities, spending, and regional strategies can be based.

Canada’s allies illustrate how such documents are written and released publicly. The committee learned that Japan publishes a Diplomatic Bluebook of almost 400 pages.³¹ It is also aware that U.S. administrations are required³² to publish a National Security Strategy.³³ After announcing in February 2020 that the United Kingdom would conduct the “largest review” of its foreign, defence, security, and development policy since the end of

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- 23 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 29 November 2023, 1735 (Jennifer Welsh, Professor, and Director, Global Governance and Security, McGill University, As an individual).
- 24 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 11 December 2023, 1215 (Colin Robertson).
- 25 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 29 November 2023, 1750 (Jennifer Welsh).
- 26 Government of Canada, [Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy](#); and Government of Canada, [Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy](#).
- 27 Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, [Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence](#), News release, 8 April 2024.
- 28 Global Affairs Canada, [Address by Minister Freeland on Canada’s foreign policy priorities](#), Speech, 6 June 2017.
- 29 Global Affairs Canada, [Canada’s Indo-Pacific Strategy](#), 2022.
- 30 Government of Canada, [A role of pride and influence in the world – overview: Canada’s international policy statement](#), 2005.
- 31 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 14 February 2024, 1655 (Stephanie Carvin, Associate Professor, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, As an Individual). Also see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, [Foreign Policy: Diplomatic Bluebook](#), 22 November 2023.
- 32 United States (U.S.), Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, [National Security Strategy](#).
- 33 For the most recent example, see U.S., The White House, [National Security Strategy](#), October 2022.

the Cold War,³⁴ its government published the integrated results in March 2021,³⁵ which have already been revised to reflect the pace of change in the international environment.³⁶ The general rationale for such exercises is expressed in Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper. It came 14 years after Australia's previous White Paper and summarized its own purpose in observing that, although "national interests are enduring, the international environment in which we pursue them has changed significantly, and so too has Australia."³⁷ The committee heard that the written articulation of foreign policy "forces choices and it forces priorities."³⁸ The results signal intentions to allies and serve as "an important communications tool."³⁹ According to testimony, if conducted rigorously⁴⁰ and backed with urgency and political will,⁴¹ such exercises need not take an excessive amount of time or follow a specific template.⁴²

Overall, this study suggested that Canada's diplomatic machinery should be guided by a foreign policy that is strategic. That is, one which balances realism about Canada's relative size and weight in the world with the ambition to be present, well-informed, and influential. To support this policy and sustain its implementation, the committee heard that the emphasis must be on ensuring that Canada has capabilities that it can tangibly utilize.

Testimony also emphasized the importance of consistency and coherence when it comes to key principles, particularly in relation to international law, justice, and universal human rights. It was emphasized to the committee that, if Canada wants its "declared commitment to international law to result in concrete diplomatic and reputational gains on the international plane, it must both be and be seen by others to be credible."⁴³ Such

34 United Kingdom, Prime Minister's Office, The Right Honourable Boris Johnson, *PM outlines new review to define Britain's place in the world*, News release, 26 February 2020.

35 United Kingdom, Cabinet Office, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, Policy paper, published 16 March 2021, last updated 2 July 2021.

36 United Kingdom, *Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world*, Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by Command of His Majesty, March 2023.

37 Australian Government, "Ministerial foreword," *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, p. vi.

38 FAAE, *Evidence*, 14 February 2024, 1655 (Stephanie Carvin).

39 Ibid.

40 FAAE, *Evidence*, 29 November 2023, 1815 (Jennifer Welsh).

41 FAAE, *Evidence*, 14 February 2024, 1720 (Thomas Juneau, Associate Professor, Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa, As an Individual).

42 FAAE, *Evidence*, 13 December 2023, 1720 (Stéphane Roussel).

43 FAAE, *Evidence*, 11 December 2023, 1210 (Ardi Imseis, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, Queen's University, As an Individual).



a status is undermined when there are perceptions of double standards in Canada’s officially adopted positions.⁴⁴ While contradictions are more of a hallmark than an aberration of international relations, it was reiterated to the committee that human rights leadership has always been expected and demanded of Canada.⁴⁵ Equally important is its application to specific cases. Testimony conveyed that the standards Canada applies to one case affects the diplomatic clout it will have when responding to others.⁴⁶

In addition to testimony that called on the government to produce a strategic, credible, and clear-eyed approach to the world, the other main finding from the committee’s study is that Canada’s governmental machinery must keep pace with significant changes and transformation. Foreign policy objectives cannot be advanced without diplomatic capacity, the committee was told, which “relies on both hard and soft power.”⁴⁷ Such multifaceted power derives from a “robust foreign service to serve individual Canadians and Canadian interests,” but also “muscular armed forces to ensure deterrence and collective security,” alongside “well-funded development assistance to deal with global inequities and support fellow democracies.”⁴⁸

To reach its full potential, some witnesses also suggested that Canada’s diplomatic capacity must be conceived of in the broadest terms. Yet, aspects of this capacity appear to be underutilized or underfunded. The committee’s study drew attention to the importance of Canada’s cultural, linguistic, and parliamentary diplomacy. These other channels of engagement were highlighted as having both an amplifying and a reinforcing effect.⁴⁹ Based on his postings abroad, one retired diplomat said that collaboration between Canadian missions and provincial delegations is “very important” because “it opens doors to promote our industries, our interests, and our values.”⁵⁰ Nevertheless, he also observed that despite what Canada is known to gain from cultural and public diplomacy, “the funding for these programs has been eviscerated.”⁵¹

44 Mark Kersten, [written brief](#), 30 January 2024, p. 1.

45 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 12 February 2024, 1745 (Alex Neve, Senior Fellow, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa, As an Individual).

46 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 14 February 2024, 1710 (Farida Deif, Canada Director, Human Rights Watch).

47 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 11 December 2023, 1215 (Colin Robertson).

48 Ibid.

49 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 11 December 2023, 1155 (Martin Théberge, President, Société nationale de l’Acadie).

50 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 11 December 2023, 1230 (Colin Robertson).

51 [Ibid.](#)

In the delivery, but also the design of Canada's foreign policy, this study underscored that Global Affairs Canada cannot be a closed shop.⁵² Significant expertise is held outside the department, including at universities, think tanks and civil society. This intellectual power can be harnessed through consultations, advisory bodies, and secondments, which need to flow in multiple directions, and at different stages of careers. According to testimony, the benefits are both general and specific. Having Global Affairs Canada employees spend more time working in the intelligence community, for example, builds mutual understanding and deepens institutional linkages.⁵³ Grants could be another tool. One proposal would see Global Affairs Canada supporting academic research in the same manner as the Department of National Defence, in part to allow "the possibility for academics to act as consultants for the department."⁵⁴

Also requiring attention is the department's internal policy capacity, beyond units that are responsible for programming, geographic relationships, and day-to-day issues management. The committee was told that a perception has taken hold among many in the research and academic community that Global Affairs Canada "has lost that policy planning edge and needs to develop much better long-term assessment of trends and their potential impacts."⁵⁵

In addition to having dedicated departmental machinery for policy formulation and over-the-horizon thinking, the committee heard that Canada could learn from its own record of policy "boldness."⁵⁶ Doing so would build on the legacy of Canadian ideas that contributed in the 1990s to the establishment of the International Criminal Court and the Ottawa Treaty to ban land mines. During those same years, Canada made the human security agenda a "central part of the Security Council's work," including initiatives that "echo to this day: the protection of civilians; women, peace and security; children and armed conflict; and the responsibility to protect."⁵⁷ Another perspective argued for a balanced approach in relation to what Canada chooses to promote through its foreign policy. The committee received a submission which argued that, while "the promotion of Canadian values used to be one of the three pillars of Canada's foreign policy of the post-Cold War

52 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 13 December 2023, 1635 (the Honourable Allan Rock, Former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations, As an Individual).

53 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 14 February 2024, 1700 (Thomas Juneau).

54 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 13 December 2023, 1740 (Stéphane Roussel).

55 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 29 November 2023, 1735 (Jennifer Welsh).

56 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 13 December 2023, 1635 (Hon. Allan Rock).

57 Ibid.



era (alongside the promotion of prosperity through trade and of world security),” the values pillar has “now overcome these two other pillars and has literally silenced them.” According to this argument, the overemphasis has been “counterproductive” and contributed to Canada’s “marginalization” as a global actor.⁵⁸

When it comes to Canada’s diplomats themselves, including their recruitment and retention, this report aims to highlight the committee’s main observations, rather than to repeat the detailed work that has already been done by the Senate and Global Affairs Canada. That said, some points bear repeating to explain why systemic improvements are required. Testimony noted, for example, that Canada allowed a decade to lapse in its recruitment of foreign service officers (2009 to 2019).⁵⁹ As one witness said, “That’s when the chain came off the bicycle.”⁶⁰ Furthermore, the foreign service directives that establish the allowances and benefits to which these officers are entitled have not been reviewed since 1981.⁶¹ In fact, many of the issues identified in the Royal Commission’s report—including spousal employment—“have never really been properly addressed.”⁶²

At the same time, because of the way that different occupational groups have been staffed, the department indicates that 74% of its Canadian public service employees are not even considered part of the “foreign service.”⁶³ This situation appears to have created issues, including frustrations related to who is prioritized for—or given access to—assignments abroad.⁶⁴ From the perspective of a group of retired members of Canada’s foreign service, this human resources model has left Canada with both “an inadequate foreign service contingent, and a large non-rotational group that lacks satisfactory long-term career prospects.”⁶⁵

It was noted during the committee’s study that, to be successful, Global Affairs Canada employees require training to ensure their proficiency in Canada’s official languages and

58 Speaking notes, 14 February 2024 (Jean-François Caron, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Nazarbayev University).

59 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 12 February 2024, 1610 (Senator Peter M. Boehm).

60 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 13 December 2023, 1650 (Guy Saint-Jacques, Former Ambassador of Canada to the People’s Republic of China, As an Individual).

61 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 12 February 2024, 1610 (Senator Peter M. Boehm).

62 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 13 December 2023, 1655 (Pamela Isfeld, President, Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers).

63 Global Affairs Canada, [Future of Diplomacy: Transforming Global Affairs Canada – Discussion paper \(June 2023\)](#).

64 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 12 February 2024, 1620 (Senator Peter M. Boehm).

65 Canadian Foreign Service Alumni Forum, [written brief](#), 12 March 2024, p. 4.

to maintain their foreign language skills once acquired.⁶⁶ Regarding career progression, the committee heard that, in a few cases where there are high-profile political considerations involved, it can make sense for ambassadorships to be given to individuals from outside the department. However, when the number of such appointees grows, it has a disillusioning effect on the career civil servants who comprise Canada's diplomatic core.⁶⁷

More generally, the department acknowledges that some of its employees, "including foreign service officers with in-depth expertise in specific geographies and issue areas, have increasingly felt disadvantaged over time, including in promotional processes, where emphasis has been placed on management competencies, rather than geographic, linguistic or issue-area expertise."⁶⁸ In addition to what one high-ranking former diplomat described as Global Affairs Canada's "bureaucratization" over the last 20 years, which has seen civil servants rise "predominantly on the basis of their administrative skills rather than their foreign policy experience," there is also the issue of resource allocation.⁶⁹ As the same witness said, the department's headquarters in Ottawa is "too big vis-à-vis the missions."⁷⁰ While they are supported by thousands of invaluable "locally engaged staff" (who are hired in host countries),⁷¹ documents indicate that only 18% of the department's public-service employees, known as "Canada-based staff," were deployed to missions in 2022.⁷²

In many cases, fixing these issues will require reforms, efficiencies, and direction from the department's leadership. Nevertheless, the committee's study underlined that Canada's diplomatic capacity is also—ultimately—a function of resources. Put plainly, the committee was told that,

Global Affairs and its foreign service cannot succeed without resources commensurate with the breadth and significance of their mission. That means money to establish and maintain the presence of appropriate size, not only in capitals, but also at the busiest

66 FAAE, *Evidence*, 12 February 2024, 1610 (Senator Peter M. Boehm).

67 FAAE, *Evidence*, 29 November 2023, 1820 (Adam Chapnick).

68 Global Affairs Canada, *Future of Diplomacy: Transforming Global Affairs Canada – Discussion paper (June 2023)*.

69 FAAE, *Evidence*, 13 December 2023, 1640 (Louise Blais, Diplomat-in-Residence, Laval University, As an Individual).

70 *Ibid.*, 1735.

71 FAAE, *Evidence*, 7 February 2024, 1810 (Hon. Mélanie Joly).

72 Global Affairs Canada, *Minister of Foreign Affairs appearance before the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (AEFA) on study on the Canadian Foreign Service and elements of the foreign policy machinery within Global Affairs Canada*, 8 June 2023, published 16 January 2024.



intersections of the multilateral world. It also means levels of development assistance that will earn us influence and credibility at the table. At present, in comparison with our key allies, we underinvest in both.⁷³

Even assuming that reforms to governmental machinery are made and Canada’s foreign policy interests are better defined, another witness put forward a similar, and equally fundamental, assessment. In the absence of adequate resources for diplomacy, defence, foreign intelligence, and national security, “we are only going to be able to partially defend our interests,” he said. “There is very simply a need to invest more.”⁷⁴ The transformation of Canadian foreign policy is, therefore, both a process and an objective that can only be realized through the targeted allocation of resources.

Indeed, when France completed a comprehensive review of its foreign service in 2023, the result was a 20% increase in the foreign ministry’s budget and the decision to hire 700 additional employees over four years.⁷⁵ The committee was also reminded that the BRICS countries—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—are seeking their own amplified voice internationally.⁷⁶ When measured according to diplomatic posts, the Global Diplomacy Index, published by the Lowy Institute, ranks Canada 14th in the G20.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the committee was informed that Canada has a large number of “small” or “micro-missions.”⁷⁸ In terms of personnel, Canada has yet to replicate the high point it reached in 1990 when it sent 2,993 foreign service officers abroad.⁷⁹

These figures and comparisons matter. Whether it is for the standards that will govern 6G wireless communication systems, or those responding to other societal advancements, the committee recognizes that rules for future frontiers, which will affect Canada’s prosperity and national security, are being written in diplomatic venues.⁸⁰ Consequently, it is in

73 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 13 December 2023, 1635 (Hon. Allan Rock).

74 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 14 February 2024, 1755 (Thomas Juneau).

75 France, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, [Foreign Service Review](#).

76 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 February 2024, 1805 (Hon. Mélanie Joly).

77 Lowy Institute, [Global Diplomacy Index](#).

78 Canadian Foreign Service Alumni Forum, [written brief](#), 12 March 2024, p. 3.

79 Global Affairs Canada, [Future of Diplomacy: Transforming Global Affairs Canada – Discussion paper \(June 2023\)](#).

80 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 February 2024, 1830 (David Morrison).

Canada's interest to ensure that it has a full complement of people,⁸¹ equipped with the right expertise and skills, at the right tables.⁸²

Capacity will affect Canada's influence in multilateral organizations overall. It may also determine whether Canada is even invited to join coalitions as they shift to more ad-hoc settings that privilege the capabilities that each actor can contribute.⁸³ The degree to which Canada is seen as a reliable ally, and included based on that reputation, is critically important—one witness stressed—because Canada “very rarely operates alone.”⁸⁴

Investment in diplomatic capacity is also about ensuring that Canada can anticipate and manage crises that affect its national interests and the well-being of its globally minded and connected citizenry.⁸⁵ Consular services need to be supported. Since 2006, the emergency evacuations of Canadians from Lebanon, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Sudan, and Gaza, along with the unprecedented repatriation efforts that were made during the COVID-19 pandemic, have driven this point home.⁸⁶ Even outside of conflict zones and emergency settings, the committee was reminded that Canadians “travel the most per capita”⁸⁷ and pay for consular services directly when obtaining their passport.⁸⁸

Today, the defining characteristic of the international system in which Canada operates is its complexity. Countless variables and forces, whether political, economic, geopolitical, or technological, are interacting and influencing the system's trajectory. That said, this complexity becomes less overwhelming when the system is viewed, metaphorically, as a house.⁸⁹ With time and pressures, even the best structures, and ones that have served well in the past, can fall into disrepair. It is people, empowered by a supportive environment, equipped with the tools and resources they need, and guided by the

81 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 13 December 2023, 1735 (Hon. Allan Rock).

82 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 February 2024, 1830 (David Morrison).

83 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 14 February 2024, 1715 (Stephanie Carvin); and FAAE, [Evidence](#), 14 February 2024, 1715 (Thomas Juneau). Also see FAAE, [Evidence](#), 11 December 2023, 1220 (Charles Burton, Senior Fellow, Macdonald-Laurier Institute, As an Individual).

84 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 14 February 2024, 1720 (Thomas Juneau).

85 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 29 November 2023, 1750 (Jennifer Welsh).

86 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 12 February 2024, 1610 (Senator Peter M. Boehm).

87 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 February 2024, 1805 (Hon. Mélanie Joly).

88 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 12 February 2024, 1740 (Gar Pardy, Former Ambassador and Policy Writer, As an Individual).

89 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 14 February 2024, 1755 (Stephanie Carvin).



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objectives they are given, who prevent this erosion or undertake renewal when it must be done.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Adam Chapnick, Professor, Defence Studies, Canadian Forces College</p> <p>Mark Kersten, Assistant Professor, University of the Fraser Valley and the Wayamo Foundation</p> <p>Jennifer Welsh, Professor, Global Governance and Security, McGill University</p>	2023/11/29	86
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Charles Burton, Senior Fellow, Macdonald-Laurier Institute</p> <p>Balkan Devlen, Director, Transatlantic Program, Macdonald-Laurier Institute</p> <p>Ardi Imseis, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, Queen's University</p>	2023/12/11	89
<p>Canadian Global Affairs Institute</p> <p>Colin Robertson, Fellow</p>	2023/12/11	89
<p>Société nationale de l'Acadie</p> <p>Véronique Mallet, Executive Director</p> <p>Martin Théberge, President</p>	2023/12/11	89

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Louise Blais, Diplomat-in-Residence, Laval University</p> <p>Hon. Allan Rock, Former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations</p> <p>Stéphane Roussel, Full Professor, École nationale d'administration publique</p> <p>Guy Saint-Jacques, Former Ambassador of Canada to the People's Republic of China</p>	2023/12/13	90
<p>Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers</p> <p>Pamela Isfeld, President</p>	2023/12/13	90
<p>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development</p> <p>Vera Alexander, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, People and Talent Management</p> <p>Shirley Carruthers, Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer</p> <p>Antoine Chevrier, Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Transformation Officer</p> <p>Stéphane Jobin, Director General, Canadian Foreign Service Institute</p> <p>Hon. Mélanie Joly, P.C., M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs</p> <p>David Morrison, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs</p>	2024/02/07	93
<p>As an individual</p> <p>Alex Neve, Senior Fellow, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa</p> <p>Gar Pardy, Former Ambassador</p> <p>Hon. Peter M. Boehm, Senator, Ontario</p>	2024/02/12	94

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>As an individual</p> <p>H.E. Jérôme Bonnafont, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France to United Nations Office in Geneva and other international organisations in Switzerland</p> <p>Stephanie Carvin, Associate Professor, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University</p> <p>Thomas Juneau, Associate Professor, Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa</p>	2024/02/14	95
<p>Human Rights Watch</p> <p>Farida Deif, Canada Director</p>	2024/02/14	95

APPENDIX B: LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

Canadian Foreign Service Alumni Forum

Kersten, Mark

Société nationale de l'Acadie

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 86, 89, 90, 93 to 96, 98, 100 and 102](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Ali Ehsassi
Chair

Supplementary Opinion of the New Democratic Party

New Democrats approached this study with particular interest in several parts of the motion: how Canada approaches the “rules-based system” and “the impact of this growing geopolitical turbulence, uncertainty, and unpredictability on Canadians,” as well as how Canada can “demonstrate leadership within key multilateral organizations.” We thank the analysts for their excellent work, and all witnesses for sharing their expertise with the Committee.

However, we are deeply frustrated that this report excludes a significant section of testimony heard over multiple meetings that was critical of the Liberal government’s approach to international law, human rights, and consular services, as well as the government’s approach to the current crisis in Israel/Palestine.

Over the past several years, and especially since the terrible attacks of October 7th, the world has witnessed the erosion of the rules-based international order. While Canada has risen to the challenge in the case of Ukraine, it has not done the same for Israel/Palestine. Rather, the Liberal government’s refusal to defend international law and human rights in the context of the war in Gaza is a blatant example of double standards and hypocrisy that threatens Canada’s reputation among its allies, especially in the Global South. While this is most evident with the situation in Israel/Palestine, it is also evident in Canada’s failure to advocate for Canadian children trapped in North East Syria and Canada’s ongoing arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

It should not be so. International law, in the words of Professor Mark Kersten, is “the currency of diplomacy.” Professor Ardi Imseis told the Committee that “Canada’s declared commitment to the rules-based international legal order is crucial to maintaining its moral standing in the world. Upholding international law as the only normative yardstick on the international plane is essential if Canada’s future diplomacy initiative is to succeed.” He continued, “for Canada’s declared commitment to international law to result in concrete diplomatic and reputational gains on the international plane, it must both be and be seen by others to be credible.”

Unfortunately, Canada’s credibility with regard to international law is now in question, precisely because of this government’s double standards when it comes to Israel/Palestine. Multiple witnesses noted Canada was once a leader in international justice, at the heart of the creation of the International Criminal Court. Yet while Canada has rightfully supported Ukrainians, the Rohingya, and the Syrian people in recent processes at international courts, it has not done the same for Palestinians and Israelis. Canada has opposed every single case at the International Court of Justice regarding Israel/Palestine, and refuses to support efforts at the International Criminal Court, despite these being two of the only mechanisms available to Palestinians and Israelis seeking justice. These choices send a clear message that Canada does not believe international law has a role to play in the context of peace between Israel and Palestine. Moreover, Canada’s position undermines its stated commitment to a global rules-based international order. In the view of New Democrats, this is completely unacceptable.

Moreover, these double-standards have caused great harm to Canada’s global reputation.

Professor Kersten testified that “those who look to Canada—victims of atrocities, diplomats, staff in international organizations, others that I engage with on an almost day-to-day basis—want leadership, and not just on a rules-based system... They still expect Canada to lead, but they wonder why in so many cases it's unwilling and unable to do so.” Said Professor Imseis, “We have no credibility, because we take a double standard.” Farida Deif of Human Rights Watch said these “glaring double-standards erode Canada’s credibility and have profound repercussions for Canadians and people around the world.” Alex Neve told the Committee that Canada’s position on the ICC and ICJ is “certainly noted by other governments. It's noted by global civil society. It's noted within the UN, and it is not to our credit. That will not serve us well with respect to ensuring that our voice is heard with respect to Israel and Gaza, and it will have reverberations more widely as well.”

Two former Canadian Ambassadors to the United Nations also testified to this issue. In his testimony to the Committee, Hon. Allan Rock urged Canada to “show leadership in international criminal justice and before the International Court of Justice.” In response to a question on Canada’s voting record on Israel/Palestine, Louise Blais told the Committee, “There has been a cost to this. This was a factor in why we lost our last (United Nations Security Council) bid, because it was well known by many countries that support the Palestinian plight that Canada might not vote in alignment with them, so it was a factor. When Canada votes with the U.S., Israel and maybe a handful of other countries, I would call that isolation.”

New Democrats strongly urge the Government of Canada to end its hypocrisy on international law and human rights in the case of Israel/Palestine and apply international law and human rights norms universally, regardless of the political implications for the governing party.

We further recommend the Government of Canada do the following:

- Immediately recognize the State of Palestine as a way to engage two states with responsibilities and obligations under international law and push for a peace process that may eventually bring security to Israelis and Palestinians;
- Fully support international justice efforts on Israel/Palestine at the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court;
- Ratify the Optional Protocol on the Convention Against Torture, which successive Liberal and Conservative governments have refused to do for nearly two decades;
- End arbitrary and discriminatory provision of consular services, including to Canadians in North East Syria;
- End arms sales to states party to conflicts which UN and human rights experts warn have indiscriminately bombed civilian populations, including Saudi Arabia and Israel; and
- Strengthen Global Affairs Canada’s legal capacity to ensure the Minister receives proper advice on Canada’s international legal obligations.