



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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## **FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

*CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AT THE FRONT STAGE OF CANADA'S  
FOREIGN POLICY*—MOTION TO PLACE TWENTY-SIXTH REPORT OF  
COMMITTEE TABLED DURING THE FIRST SESSION OF THE  
FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT ON THE ORDERS OF THE DAY—  
DEBATE ADJOURNED

Speech by:  
The Honourable Patricia Bovey

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

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### FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

*CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AT THE FRONT STAGE OF CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY*—MOTION TO PLACE TWENTY-SIXTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED DURING THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT ON THE ORDERS OF THE DAY—  
DEBATE ADJOURNED

**Hon. Patricia Bovey:** Thank you, Senator Boehm.

Colleagues, I am speaking later than I thought I would be this evening, but this is a truly important issue, I think, for the country of Canada. The Senate's Foreign Affairs and International Trade Committee's report that was tabled in this house in June 2019 — entitled *Cultural Diplomacy at the Front Stage of Canada's Foreign Policy* — is an important one. It is unfortunate that it was tabled just before we rose for the summer, and then there was an election, and then there was COVID. So here we are, picking up our steps. It would have been nice if we had been able to do this earlier.

When I suggested that the Foreign Affairs and International Trade Committee study cultural diplomacy, I truly believed then that cultural soft power was essential in developing Canada's international profile; I still do. A builder for economic trade and growth, cultural diplomacy is important in building trust for international negotiations and collaborations. Culture portrays who we are — our national values, roots and diversities. Conveying Canadian messages and realities abroad, culture tells others what Canada is, where we come from and our courage in where we're going. That is critically important. Our international partners must understand our cultures, ethics and history.

Cultural diplomacy's integral importance to international trade and foreign relations has been much studied and written about. Today, I still agree with the U.K.'s 2007 *Cultural Diplomacy* report by Kirsten Bound, Rachel Briggs, John Holden and Samuel Jones. It stated that ". . . more than ever before, culture has a vital role to play in international relations."

The report went on to say that culture is:

. . . the means by which we come to understand others, and an aspect of life with innate worth that we enjoy and seek out. Cultural exchange gives us the chance to appreciate points of commonality and, where there are differences, to understand the motivations and humanity that underlie them. . . . these attributes make culture a critical forum for negotiation and a medium of exchange in finding shared solutions.

The value of cultural activity comes precisely from its independence, its freedom and the fact that it represents and connects people . . . .

Our report was unanimously passed by our committee, chaired by former Senator Andreychuk. Again, I thank members of that 2017-2019 committee, especially Senator Oh and Senator

Ataullahjan who embraced it ardently from the outset. We examined the issue, as well as its impacts and benefits, from a 360-degree perspective: artists, arts organizations, foreign trade and trade missions, business, Canadian embassies and, comparatively, what was being done elsewhere — all underlined the importance of culture on the foreign stage as a means of strengthening the profile of Canada abroad.

We heard from Canadian and foreign diplomats; Canadian and international funding agencies; artists of all disciplines; educators; academics; arts organizations; business leaders; and staff from Global Affairs Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts and Canadian Heritage. We heard emphatically that artists' works in all disciplines significantly enhance Canada's international role by connecting many international dimensions, defending our national values and highlighting Canada's economic and social position abroad.

We also heard how Canada's business overseas increases with cultural understanding. Citing the impressive tangible economic benefits — and more — of Canada's former Trade Routes program, witnesses underlined the critical need for support to enable artists to take their work and knowledge of Canada abroad. It was clear that we must retool our cultural diplomacy approaches.

Simon Brault, the CEO of Canada Council for the Arts, said during his testimony that we were:

. . . ten years behind where we were and where we could be as a result of the cuts by former governments.

That's "governments" plural. I fear we are now even further behind.

[Translation]

I sincerely hope that culture will once again be an important aspect of Canada's foreign policy. I encourage the cultural attachés and staff who have a knowledge and understanding of art to give Canadian art more exposure in all of our Canadian embassies, on the international scene, in theatres, at book fairs, in art galleries and at museums, other cultural centres and festivals.

[English]

I also hope Canadian artists and arts organizations will again be part of international trade missions.

The Creative Export Strategy announced by the Department of Canadian Heritage in 2018 was heartening. A strategy aimed to help Canada's creative industries gain opportunities in new markets around the world, its announced \$125 million budget was to support three key pillars: boost export funding in existing Canadian Heritage programs; increase and strengthen the presence of Canadian creative industries abroad; and create a new creative export funding program, as well as build the relationships needed to make business deals. Open to all media, including design; for-profit organizations and not-for-profit

organizations; and First Nations, Inuit and Métis councils, governments or organizations, it was obvious from the outset of the first grant run that the monies fell far short of demand.

The impact of cultural diplomacy was stressed in all of my international discussions in Europe, South America, Mexico, the U.S., the U.K. and, this morning, in a meeting with parliamentarians from the Welsh Parliament. As well, over the years, with all of the meetings I had with the Arctic Circle and circumpolar organizations, Indigenous languages and cultures were consistently highlighted as critically important.

Colleagues, culture is essential in all of our international relationships. It is empowering to see Canadian artists' works in places like Canada House in London or our embassy in Paris. Art from every province and territory is installed in Canada House on Trafalgar Square.

My antennae have also been focused on intellectual property and copyright in our trade agreements: the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA; the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA; and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP. I am pleased that the government insisted on protecting Canada's culture and intellectual property in these negotiations, championed particularly by former international trade minister Jim Carr, who is a former Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra oboist and Manitoba Arts Council CEO.

Encouraging provincial collaboration, our eight recommendations gave cultural diplomacy responsibility to Global Affairs Canada, Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts — with Global Affairs Canada taking the lead. Global Affairs Canada has real estate around the world, with staff and local connections on the ground. Heritage Canada and the Canada Council for the Arts have arts, culture and heritage expertise. We don't have a Goethe Institute, a British Council or a Japan Foundation, but we do have this opportunity to showcase our stellar creators and ideas.

We need articulated goals, cultural training for overseas embassy staff, short- and long-term monitoring mechanisms and learning through Canadian studies abroad.

The specific recommendations included that cultural diplomacy in Canada's international relations take an increasingly important role, showcasing the innovation and excellence of Canadian artists and the strength and diversity of culture in Canada, expressing the multicultural backgrounds of Canadians; that the arts and culture sector be part of all Canadian trade missions; and that Canadian embassies present and assist Canadian artists and organizations abroad. Furthermore, it ensured that all Canadian missions have either a cultural attaché or trained staff knowledgeable and able to support Canada's cultural work and international collaborations.

I still endorse each and every one of the eight recommendations.

[*Translation*]

The first steps that were taken after the report was published were encouraging, but they were cut short by COVID-19. Canada lost a lot of cultural power in the early 2000s. We need to get it back. Given the current international conflicts, cultural diplomacy is even more important.

[*English*]

As is often said, "At times of international political difficulty, culture can keep doors open." UNESCO calls for, "dialogue based on music and the arts, a vector for strengthening mutual understanding and interaction and for building a culture of peace and respect for cultural diversity."

Our report's release did bring some positive changes. Canada Council for the Arts opened a special funding stream for international activities. Global Affairs Canada launched a preliminary training program.

Organizations were ready. Recently, Mary Reid of Woodstock's Art Gallery presented artist John Hartman's portraits of Canadian authors at Canada House in London, England. William Huffman showed Cape Dorset art in Warsaw and Korea.

At the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, or OSCE, last summer in Birmingham, a unanimous vote of all 780 international parliamentarians supported Arctic security. Arts and culture were part of those discussions, as they were at every OSCE meeting I attended during my time as senator.

In November, Canada's First Nations delegates to COP 27 expertly showcased First Nations' cultural approaches to climate change solutions. You know, too, that work is well advanced for the participation in Ghana's Pan African Heritage Museum.

Three years ago, at my first meeting at that museum's international curatorial council, I was surprised to learn that Canada was thought of as being part of the U.S. That misconception now dispelled, Canada's content steering committee for our virtual and real participations, chaired by B.C. artist and poet Chantal Gibson, is seen as a leading model.

Our cultural diplomacy report was the catalyst for Global Affairs Canada and the Canada Council for the Arts funding, enabling the hiring of six regional Black curators.

[*Translation*]

These recent activities are encouraging but rare since the cultural diplomacy policy hasn't been officially adopted. It isn't known or understood and hasn't been fully implemented by Global Affairs Canada, even though I have received a lot of encouragement from some ambassadors and officials. There are many people who, like me, believe that cultural diplomacy needs more visibility within the department itself in order to be as effective as it could and should be. The result would be transformative for Canada as a whole, and for its culture and place in the world.

[English]

As a senator, and from my prior professional experience in presenting Canadian arts abroad in Europe, Asia, the U.K. and the U.S., I can attest that a strong cultural diplomacy presence will benefit Canada at home and abroad, our creators and cultural organizations. The financial returns for Canada will be significant, as they were before the program was cut, and it will feed our tourism.

Now more than ever, we need our allies to know us, and as part of UNESCO, we have a responsibility to assist in preserving culture from war and climate desecration. Cultural diplomacy is the appropriate vehicle.

In discussing cultural diplomacy, Simon Mark wrote that its:

. . . potential power rests on its intersection with national culture, national values, national identity, and national pride . . . [It] can show a state's personality in a way that connects with people . . . . The power of a cultural performance, or a film, or a scholarship to connect should not be underestimated.

I close with a personal story.

In the 1990s, I visited a wonderful, small U.K. bookshop in Durham, its floors piled high with books, overflowing shelves and three big, round tables down the middle filled with Canadian authors. A Canadian book festival? "No," said the owner. "The tables are for the world's best writers. Do you have a problem that they are all Canadian?"

A former Japanese ambassador to Canada told me on his departure that Canada has the best writers. He took many Canadian authors' works back to Japan with him to have them translated. Canada should have done those translations, or could have.

Of course, Alice Munro received the Nobel Prize in Literature; Margaret Atwood is celebrated globally; and the film of Mariam Toews' award-winning book, *Women Talking*, won an Oscar this year. A Canadian from Vancouver Island, Aaron Watkin, was recently appointed Artistic Director Designate of the English National Ballet, and Naomi Woo — daughter of our Senator Woo — given her many invitations, is about to move to Europe to pursue her conducting career there.

Colleagues, our voices are respected beyond our borders, though without the support I believe they are due.

We shouldn't hide our creators who tell the world who we are. Canada's profile abroad is largely its culture. As it was for decades before culture's cut as a fourth pillar of diplomacy, our government's investment will be far less than the resulting multifold, positive economic profile returns. Through cultural diplomacy, pride in our internationally acclaimed creators will become our brand — a brand which should be known as Canadian, not American.

Please endorse the tabling of this report so we can get a response from the government to ensure that work can begin concretely and that training can continue effectively. Thank you.

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