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# GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA TRANSFORMATION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

2023 to 2026



# Global Affairs Canada Transformation Implementation Plan (2023 to 2026)

After 3 decades of unprecedented security and prosperity, Canada is grappling with a shift in economic and political power away from its traditional allies and partners, a return of great power competition, increasing vulnerability to transnational threats like climate change and cyber attacks, and rapid technological change. At the same time, the fabric of Canada has evolved: Canadians are much more connected to the world than in the past, and they have higher expectations for how their government will promote and protect their interests overseas. Global Affairs Canada (GAC) stands at the forefront of Canada's international policies and operations. It has a proud history but now faces the challenge of adapting to this rapidly changing environment. Faced with similar pressures, many of Canada's allies and partners are re-investing in their diplomatic capacities. Canada must do so now, or risk losing ground to partners and competitors alike.

It is in this context that Global Affairs Canada is implementing a multi-year organizational transformation to ensure that it is well equipped to serve Canadians in meeting the global challenges of today and of the future. The implementation of this evergreen, rolling 3-year transformation plan follows the launch of the *Future of Diplomacy: Transforming Global Affairs Canada* [discussion paper](#) in June 2023. The plan lays out how GAC will transform itself to better deliver on its mandates in foreign affairs, trade, international assistance and consular support.

Our implementation plan outlines an ambitious agenda focused on outcomes under the 5 following pillars:

- Our organizational culture: Strengthening our foundation
- Our people: Becoming an employer of choice, in Canada and abroad
- Our global presence: Increasing our influence and engagement where it matters most
- Our policy: Leveraging our strengths to advance Canada's national interests
- Our processes and tools: Building a high-performing organization

This is an evergreen plan that will evolve over time. The key actions and deliverables outlined below, which build on work already well underway, are all necessary to achieve the main outcomes of this transformation process.

## **Our organizational culture: Strengthening our foundation**

Culture is at the core. The bedrock of GAC's transformation will be defining our shared values and principles: what drives and defines us as a department and what the key drivers of our transformation efforts should be. By the end of 2023, GAC will publish a North Star statement emphasizing our common purpose, the values and principles that underpin our organization, and the culture we want to uphold and strengthen. We can expect to see a commitment to transparency, accountability, excellence, service, and collaboration. We also know that employees want us to take smart risks, break silos and foster a culture of resource reallocation. Finally, equity, diversity and inclusion, official languages and employee well-being will continue to be at the forefront of everything we do. However, publishing a statement does not mean that transforming our organization by strengthening our culture will be complete. The initiative will only be successful if it is followed up by sustained actions that result in changed behaviours, which is why we will recommit to these values and principles each year and take stock of our progress.



### Key outcomes include:

- Shared values and principles: GAC embodies the values of taking smart risks, transparency, shared accountability, well-being, excellence, service, equity, diversity and inclusion, effective resource management and collaboration
- Equity, diversity and inclusion: GAC employees are representative of Canada in all its diversity and actively contribute to an inclusive and equitable organizational culture at all levels
- Collaboration and knowledge-sharing: GAC is a learning organization that systematically shares knowledge across the department, learning from and building on its experiences, networks and expertise
- Official languages: GAC's official-languages capacity is increased across the department and the use of both official languages is equally promoted

## **Our people: Becoming an employer of choice, in Canada and abroad**

Throughout the transformation, we will keep a central focus on our most important asset, our people. We will support all levels and categories of employees to contribute their full potential and have meaningful careers. We will achieve this by building competencies and investing in long-term career development with an emphasis on equity, diversity, inclusion, reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and official languages. We will also invest in the renewal of our foreign service and position Canada as a competitive employer for our locally engaged staff around the world. We will ensure we have the right people in the right place at the right time—with the right skills to deliver on Canada's international priorities. This will mean having a hard look at how we manage human resources, re-evaluating our processes and adopting innovative and efficient digital-first solutions.

### Key outcomes include:

- GAC is an employer of choice: GAC attracts, nurtures and retains talent, in Canada and abroad, by being a competitive employer, prioritizing career development and learning and investing in the renewal of its workforce
- A more agile service model: GAC's human resources processes are modernized to streamline operations, improve efficiency and create surge capacity
- Supporting deployment abroad: Employees and their families posted abroad are supported effectively
- Strengthening the role of heads of mission (HOM): The HOM's role is strengthened through recognition that a HOM is the chief executive officer of Canadian missions abroad

## **Our global presence: Increasing our influence and engagement where it matters most**

To get our job done as an integrated and influential foreign ministry that draws on its unique assets, we need to be present in the world in the right places and at the right level. This is more important than ever in an emerging multipolar context where Canada needs to maintain and nurture alliances and develop new partnerships. Strengthening our presence on the ground is required to promote and protect Canada's strategic interests where they matter most. We are developing tools and governance to ensure we can make agile decisions to more easily adjust our footprint as events dictate and use innovative ways to maximize our presence abroad. We will expand our influence in multilateral organizations and countries of strategic importance to Canada, rooted in data-driven approaches about where we can have the most impact for Canadians. We will also strengthen and expand our



communications and public diplomacy function rooted in Canada's values, culture and people-to-people ties.

#### Key outcomes include:

- Presence abroad: Canada has the right level of representation abroad to continue to increase its global influence, defend its national interests, and provide quality services to Canadians
- Presence in multilateral organizations: GAC has increased influence in multilateral organizations to advance Canada's national interests, including through innovative means
- Communications, advocacy and public diplomacy: GAC effectively connects with Canadians and foreign audiences through strengthened communication, advocacy and public diplomacy

### **Our policy: Leveraging our strengths to advance Canada's national interests**

GAC will systematically increase and strengthen its engagement with academics, civil society and other stakeholders to render our strategic policies and activities more informed and effective. We will seek to reinforce our approaches and capacities to support integrated, whole-of-government responses to issues of national interest that impact all Canadians, including climate change, energy, critical minerals, supply chain monitoring, emerging technologies, and the full range of protracted and overlapping global crises that occur more and more frequently.

#### Key outcomes include:

- Open policy function: GAC is openly engaging external partners and policy experts across Canada and around the world and is focused on global challenges of the future
- Cyber and digital leadership: GAC plays a lead role as part of whole-of-government efforts to shape global norms on emerging and disruptive technologies
- Climate change, green transition and critical minerals: GAC leverages its unique global assets to work with partners in delivering whole-of-government approaches to climate change, the green transition and critical minerals
- Crisis response: GAC effectively leads whole-of-government responses to global crises, built on its well-established consular and humanitarian capacities

### **Our processes and tools: Building a high-performing organization**

We will place a heavy emphasis on increasing our efficiency, so that over time we can focus our people and resources on higher-value activities for Canadians. Better managing our workload will contribute to improving the well-being of our teams and increase our effectiveness. In September 2023, we are launching a red-tape review and action plan spanning the entire department. The exercise will focus on reducing burdensome processes and workloads at headquarters and at our missions abroad, taking advantage of a range of new technologies to empower our people to focus on what matters most. Building on existing efforts, we will modernize our IM/IT and digital services, enhance data literacy and knowledge management, and transform the tools and processes that underpin the delivery of Canada's international assistance programs. We will also explore options to ensure GAC's instruments provide the required flexibility to operate globally in an efficient manner. Leveraging new and emerging technologies, reducing risk-aversion and streamlining how we work are central to the goal of operationalizing modern tools and processes fit for a 21st-century foreign ministry.



### Key outcomes include:

- Red tape: GAC is working efficiently, taking smart risks and focusing on the highest value work for Canadians
- Grants and contributions (Gs&Cs): GAC has a modernized set of tools and processes, maximizing efficiencies, partnerships and value for Canadians
- IM/IT backbone: GAC has a solid IM/IT foundation and infrastructure that is secure and reliable, enabling a resilient and secure digital base
- Tools and systems: GAC's platforms are modern, innovative, interconnected and responsive to the emerging needs of the department, and the department has the behaviours and practices needed to use tools and systems effectively to share and manage knowledge
- Digital skills: GAC employees are empowered with the right tools and training to innovate, optimize and improve their work through increased digital and data literacy
- Data insights: GAC is fully harnessing data for complex analysis, decision-making and policy-making

## **Enabling the transformation: Commitment, prudence and accountability**

GAC's transformation exercise comes at a time when the Government of Canada is refocusing its spending. The implementation plan has been developed with this in mind, by adopting many approaches that are cost-neutral or that can be fully assumed with existing resources. We will apply this mindset and discipline, including an approach where savings and efficiencies will be reinvested to support and ensure the sustainability of GAC's transformation as well as fostering a culture of reallocation. Progress will be made on a number of fronts with existing levels of resources, and we will engage GAC staff and partners in the near future on these key initiatives. However, additional resources will be required to ensure full implementation of some deliverables. Exact sources for these, including via internal reallocations, remain to be fully confirmed and work to identify those will be part of the next steps. This rolling 3-year implementation plan will remain evergreen and will be updated regularly to add new initiatives and ideas, to show progress on existing ones, and to ensure transparency and accountability.



## Transformation Implementation Plan summary charts

### Our organizational culture: Strengthening our foundation

Outcomes and actions	2023	2024	2025	2026
grey fill = timeframe of action				
<b>Shared values and principles: GAC embodies the values of taking smart risks, transparency, shared accountability, well-being, excellence, service, equity, diversity and inclusion, effective resource management and collaboration</b>				
Develop and publish a North Star statement setting out our common purpose and commitment to key values and principles with an annual organization-wide re-commitment led by senior executives				
Implement an annual accountability framework that aligns with GAC's Values and Ethics Code and Code of Conduct for Canadian Representatives Abroad				
Continuously adjust this implementation plan, using data gathered through targeted surveys, focus groups and consultations, including the Public Service Employee Survey results, to develop action plans to address employee feedback				
Release a leadership statement on OpenGAC identifying a comprehensive approach to becoming more open as an organization in policy-making and other areas				
Publish an annual report on misconduct and wrongdoing				
<b>Equity, diversity and inclusion: GAC employees are representative of Canada in all its diversity and actively contribute to an inclusive and equitable organizational culture at all levels</b>				
Advance the implementation of the department's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan and apply an EDI and intersectional GBA+ lens to all transformation initiatives				
Expand the implementation of the Anti-Racism Strategy Action Plan, including the Deputy Ministers Sponsorship program				
Accelerate the implementation of the department's Action Plan on Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, including to increase Indigenous representation at all levels of the workforce and incorporate Indigenous perspectives across all business lines				
Fully implement the department's Accessibility Plan to remove and prevent barriers and make the organization more accessible for persons with disabilities				



**Collaboration and knowledge-sharing: GAC is a learning organization that systematically shares knowledge across the department, learning from and building on its experiences, networks and expertise**

Launch a charter on the use of information, technology, knowledge and data, setting out specific commitments to be integrated in performance evaluations to increase peer-learning, network building and expertise sharing							
Actively look at existing practices, tools and platforms, and modify them and/or develop new ones where required to enable knowledge sharing and collaboration across the department							

**Official languages: GAC’s official languages capacity is increased across the department and the use of both official languages is equally promoted**

Promote best practices to encourage equal use of French and English in the department.							
Ensure that all employees are aware of their obligations under the <i>Official Languages Act</i> and that all employees, particularly in leadership positions in Canada and abroad (deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, heads of mission etc.), have the required language proficiency							
Centralize official-language training and expand its access to employees across all classifications, with a commitment from managers to support official-language training for their employees							

**Our people: Becoming an employer of choice, in Canada and abroad**

Outcomes and actions	2023	2024	2025	2026
	grey fill = timeframe of action			
<b>GAC is an employer of choice: GAC attracts, nurtures and retains talent, in Canada and abroad, by being a competitive employer, prioritizing career development and learning, and investing in the renewal of its workforce</b>				
Create career development frameworks for the entire GAC workforce, to be supported by a dedicated unit				
Broaden our performance management tools and practices, including ensuring that talent management is expanded to the full organization and that we have the tools in place to mandate comprehensive evaluations for managers				
Strengthen the commitment, via executives’ performance management agreements, to dedicate a minimum proportion of time to the mentoring and coaching of GAC colleagues				
Review and update the Locally Engaged Staff (LES) Policy Framework and expedite the LES benefits modernization initiative, with the objective of increasing GAC’s competitiveness across our network				





Develop a policy instrument focused on ensuring the right level of protection and care for LES, especially in times of crisis, in consultations with relevant partner departments							
Modernize existing tools to map skills, knowledge, expertise and foreign language competencies possessed by all staff and ensure these tools are used to address surge capacity needs							
Reshape the Canadian Foreign Service Institute to align learning with identified gaps and priorities							
Establish exchange programs with key departments and agencies in the public service and consider expanding to non-government organizations to increase interchange and develop skills							
Increase capacity in strategic foreign languages, based on ongoing mapping of existing ones, and ensure staff meet foreign-language requirements prior to posting							
Ensure that regular internal recruitment and promotion exercises take place to open paths for all employees to move across classifications							
Expand and fill pools of foreign service officers through internal processes and a reformed approach to post-secondary recruitment							
Launch a review of the assignment process for rotational cycles, with the participation of heads of mission, to better align talent with organizational needs							
<b>A more agile service model: GAC's human resources processes are modernized to streamline operations, improve efficiency and create surge capacity</b>							
Modernize and streamline HR operations across all activities to improve service delivery							
Automate administrative HR processes by leveraging emerging technologies to allow staff to focus on higher-value work							
Review the People and Talent Management Branch (HCM) organizational structure and governance to ensure it is fit for purpose							
Implement an HR data centre of expertise to enhance data availability, visualization and business intelligence							
Strengthen the internal capacity to investigate and report on misconduct and wrongdoing							
Develop and implement models to support surge capacity in Canada and abroad, including in times of crisis, through short- and medium-term assignments and an annual temporary duty program to provide employees across classifications with experience abroad							
<b>Supporting deployment abroad: Employees and their families posted abroad are supported effectively</b>							
Advocate for revisions to the Foreign Service Directives (FSDs) to ensure the program is fit for purpose and meets the needs of Canada's workforce abroad, particularly in times of crisis							





Conduct an analysis of the administration of the FSDs to identify efficiencies and ways to strengthen its client-focus							
Improve the assignment process by publishing timelines for all key stages of the annual assignment cycles, publishing lists of forward-looking assignment opportunities and confirming assignments earlier in the calendar year							
Create capacity to support families through all stages of a posting abroad, including the challenges related to spousal employment abroad and transitioning to life back in Canada							
<b>Role of heads of mission (HOMs): The HOM's role is strengthened through recognition that a HOM is the chief executive officer of Canadian missions abroad</b>							
Ensure the timely deployment of heads of mission by moving up the launch dates for the annual HOM process.							
Ensure that all transformation initiatives and corporate governance structures at GAC include the participation of HOMs and/or mission representatives							
As part of the review of internal processes, quickly identify measures that will come to strengthen HOMs' decision-making and accountability over resources deployed at their missions							

### Our global presence: Increasing our influence and engagement where it matters most

Outcomes and actions	2023	2024	2025	2026
	grey fill = timeframe of action			
<b>Presence abroad: Canada has the right level of representation abroad to increase its global influence, defend its national interests and provide quality services to Canadians</b>				
Develop tools and establish a governance mechanism to regularly review and adjust Canada's presence abroad by, among other measures, considering innovative models of representation abroad, including honorary consuls				
Based on the global footprint review, and building on recent expansions, provide options to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to adjust Canada's presence abroad, including in G20 countries and other strategic locations				
Implement ministerial decision on augmenting and reallocating our presence abroad				



<b>Presence in multilateral organizations: GAC has increased influence in multilateral organizations to advance Canada’s national interests, including through innovative means</b>							
Provide options to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to continue to increase presence in strategic multilateral missions	Grey						
Develop options to increase our engagement by innovative means such as establishing a unit to support candidacies, appointments, secondments and elections within multilateral bodies and organizations, and contribute to the UN Junior Professional Officer Programme	Grey						
Implement decisions on increasing footprint and engagement in multilateral organizations		Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
<b>Communications, advocacy and public diplomacy: GAC effectively connects with Canadians and foreign audiences through strengthened communication, advocacy and public diplomacy</b>							
Widen GAC’s communications approaches to counter disinformation and misinformation from key state sponsors	Grey						
Broaden crisis and emergency communications to respond to an increasingly complex and volatile global environment	Grey	Grey	Grey				
Conduct a GAC-wide review and present options to deputy ministers for strengthening strategic communications, advocacy and public diplomacy to better engage Canadians and foreign audiences		Grey	Grey				

**Our policy: Leveraging our strengths to advance Canada’s national interests**

<b>Outcomes and actions</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>
	grey fill = timeframe of action			
<b>Open policy function: GAC is openly engaging external partners and policy experts across Canada and around the world and is focused on global challenges of the future</b>				
Announce plans to launch an Open Insights Hub that systematically connects GAC’s policy-development and research with Canadian and international experts and partners, to better predict and respond to global issues of national interest	Grey			
Host roundtables with experts and scholars to co-design the Open Insights Hub		Grey		
Host a first annual, high-level “Open Insights Conference”, with a focus on key issues of national interest, including climate change, the clean energy transition and critical minerals			Grey	Grey



Officially launch the Open Insights Hub with active participation of Canada’s missions abroad, Canadian and foreign academic institutions and other stakeholders							
Publicly release analytical products and reports through the Open Insights Hub, connected to GAC’s knowledge management systems							
Launch new “OpenGAC” fellowships to bring scholars-in-residence from diverse academic institutions to GAC headquarters, and eventually extend to missions abroad to host scholars and experts from local universities							
<b>Cyber and digital leadership: GAC plays a lead role as part of whole-of-government efforts to shape global norms on emerging and disruptive technologies</b>							
Appoint a dedicated senior official at GAC for cyber, technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital issues to leverage GAC’s assets, collaborate with partner departments and agencies, and engage international partners							
Working in tandem with partner departments and agencies and leveraging our presence abroad, develop coherent and strategic approaches to help shape and engage on various efforts related to the global governance of emerging technologies, including AI							
Launch a program and seek collaboration with governmental and non-governmental partners to increase in-house awareness on technology and cyber issues to ensure such awareness is applied as a key lens across GAC’s policy and programming activities							
<b>Climate change, green transition and critical minerals: GAC leverages its unique global assets to work with partners in delivering whole-of-government approaches to climate change, the green transition and critical minerals</b>							
With Environment and Climate Change Canada, Natural Resources Canada and other partners, better integrate climate, environmental and energy priorities across Canada’s international strategic engagement, including on critical minerals, the green transition, supply chains and investment promotion							
Increase climate literacy across GAC via training, leveraging the Open Insights Hub and strengthened knowledge management							
Develop and present actionable options to deputy ministers for strengthening GAC’s strategic contribution to whole-of-government leadership on climate change, the green transition and critical minerals							
Implement decisions to strengthen leadership on climate change, the green transition and critical minerals							
<b>Crisis response: GAC effectively leads whole-of-government responses to global crises, built on its well-established consular and humanitarian capacities</b>							
Develop and test interim solutions for increasing surge capacity to support GAC’s crisis response							
Conduct a full review of GAC’s crisis management and present options to deputy ministers for strengthening							



whole-of-government responses to the full range and duration of global crises							
Implement improvements to GAC's crisis response capabilities and approaches							

## Our processes and tools: Building a high-performing organization

Outcomes and actions	2023	2024	2025	2026
	grey fill = timeframe of action			
<b>Red tape: GAC is working efficiently, taking smart risks and focusing on the highest value work for Canadians</b>				
Launch a deputy minister-led department-wide red tape reduction and process modernization exercise, including taking immediate actions to reduce burdensome processes and increase smart risk taking at HQ and missions abroad				
In parallel, and mindful of security of information considerations, engage with early adopters to develop approaches and best practices in the use of emerging technologies (e.g. AI, quantum computing) to streamline key areas of work across the department				
<b>Grants and contributions (Gs&amp;Cs): GAC has a modernized set of tools and processes, maximizing efficiencies, partnerships and value for Canadians</b>				
Redesign programming processes, including a single common data model for all grants and contributions				
Design risk, financial and results-based management components of a new single project management system				
Develop and implement digital approaches and automate programming, workflow, collaboration, monitoring and oversight, leveraging the use of emerging technologies and AI				
Launch a public reporting tool to continue to increase transparency for Canadians				
<b>IM/IT Backbone: GAC has a solid IM/IT foundation and infrastructure that is secure and reliable, enabling a resilient and secure digital base</b>				
Establish an integrated, whole-of-department approach to aligning information management and information technology (IM/IT) needs with resources				
Advance GAC's international IM/IT network by building a secure and resilient digital infrastructure that reduces business risk, improves performance and increases agility				
Strengthen cyber security by enhancing the Security Operations Centre to include cloud threat detection and response				



Improve connectivity at missions abroad and ensure that GAC employees at mission can make use of digital tools in secure zones							
<b>Tools and systems: GAC’s platforms are modern, innovative, interconnected, and responsive to the emerging needs of the department, and the department has the behaviours and practices needed to use tools and systems effectively to share and manage knowledge</b>							
Deliver department-wide AI and data analytics capabilities to meet existing and future demands across business lines							
Improve efficiency by investing in solutions to support data collection, management and analysis across various existing departmental systems							
Implement a streamlined and centralized information management system in Microsoft 365 to improve storing and sharing information and knowledge							
Enhance IM/IT service delivery and support at missions by increasing automation and employee self-service							
<b>Digital skills: GAC employees are empowered with the right tools and training to innovate, optimize and improve their work through increased digital and data literacy</b>							
Establish the role of the chief digital officer to facilitate data literacy and culture change, including promoting a digital-first mindset							
Strengthen education of all staff regarding cyber threats and develop a digital HR strategy to ensure the department has the right IT and digital skills							
Empower employees through strong engagement and training to ensure employees understand and support digital transformation solutions							
Expand the presence of IT professionals at missions abroad to improve service delivery							
Increase tools and resources for employee self-service and establish a user-experience centre of expertise to incubate employee-driven innovation							
<b>Data insights: GAC is fully harnessing data for complex analysis, decision-making and policy-making</b>							
Enhance collaboration between the chief data officer and chief digital officer to identify and address critical data challenges							
Map the existing data environment at GAC to find areas of excellence in data collection and use that can be amplified and replicated							
Design and implement a “data accelerator lab” that leverages talent from across the department to deliver innovative solutions for priority data challenges							
Increase data literacy across the entire department and cultivate a network of “data advocates” who are creatively incentivized to promote data culture							
Transition the “data accelerator lab” into a sustainable hub to deliver solutions for ongoing data challenges, including around culture change							