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The Role of the Department of External Affairs

As the Government's central agency with primary responsibility for the management of Canada's foreign affairs, the Department of External Affairs has developed the bilateral and multilateral contacts as well as the necessary expertise to promote and develop Canada's foreign cultural relations. Internationally, the Department is the interlocutor of foreign governments; nationally it is the catalyst whose leadership is exercised dually, projecting Canadian cultural interests abroad and informing Canadians of foreign opportunities; finally, it is the co-ordinator focusing cultural interests from across the country upon particular international requirements. It is thus in a unique position to provide leadership in the determination of the policies, priorities and resources required to compete effectively in the pursuits of cultural diplomacy.

As part of its mandate for the conduct of Canada's foreign relations, the Department seeks to promote international cultural relations in a manner consistent with, and in support of, general foreign policy objectives. In the cultural area, these objectives were defined by Cabinet in 1974 as follows:

- To support effectively foreign policy objectives, taking fully into account Canada's domestic cultural policies;

- To promote abroad Canada's domestic, economic, social and political interests;

- To reflect internationally the growing creativity and scope of Canadian culture and to promote, as an extension of domestic cultural policy, the export of Canadian cultural manifestations abroad;

- To improve professional opportunities abroad for Canadian artists and scholars for the continuing development and growth of the Canadian artistic and academic community;

- To meet changing requirements of foreign policy by the capacity to adapt the geographical application of external cultural activities to these requirements;

- To engage each selected foreign country in the development of cultural exchanges with Canada on an

agreed basis of mutual benefit.

In the realization of these objectives, the Department assumes a broad panorama of responsibilities. These range from policy and planning, negotiation of diplomatic agreements and program implementation to numerous consultation and co-ordination arrangements.

Canada has formal cultural agreements or informal arrangements with several countries. Formal agreements have been concluded with Brazil, Italy, France, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, Mexico and Japan. The General Exchanges Agreement with the USSR provides for a wide variety of exchanges—artistic, academic and sports. Annual bilateral talks take place with Great Britain, the Netherlands and China. There are the project-by-project arrangements Canada maintains with other countries, either at the governmental level or on an institutional basis. The effective implementation of all these agreements and arrangements requires a great deal of planning, long and often arduous negotiations and a substantial amount of administrative work.

Regardless of the framework within which they are pursued, the Department's programs are designed to respond to Canada's foreign cultural policy objectives and priorities, and to spur the cultural community in the presentation and promotion of its works abroad. The Department's publication of March 1979 provides additional details. Activities in the artistic field include tours abroad by Canada's professional performing arts organizations, major exhibitions of Canadian art, lecture tours by writers and other artists, film screenings, book donations, assistance with market development and visits to Canada by foreign artists. In the academic field, there is the highly-regarded Canadian Studies program, initiated to promote greater knowledge of Canadian intellectual achievements in selected foreign universities, as well as a major program of scholarships and fellowships and