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The Essence of Canadian Foreign Policy

Canada's foreign policy is driven by the need to protect and promote Canadian interests and values abroad.

For more than 50 years, Canada's foreign policy has shown remarkable consistency. Neither our interests – security, prosperity and a rule-based international order – nor our values – a spirit of moderation, compromise, the rule of law, and social and economic justice – have changed.

The search for security underpins our foreign policy. Security is not an end but a means; without peace, order and stability, prosperity and development cannot occur. New threats to international security – environmentally unsustainable practices, proliferation, irregular migration – are supplanting the former bipolar paradigm of the Cold war.

Canada's economy and prosperity is heavily dependent on trade. Foreign investment capital and technology and expanded access to new and existing markets remain vital to future economic growth. Liberalized trade and investment regimes, multilateral, regional and bilateral, are central to successful pursuit of these objectives.

Strong and active support for multilateral institutions and approaches – in both the political and economic spheres – has been central to the pursuit of our foreign and trade policy objectives. Bilateral and regional initiatives can and should enhance our efforts to build rule-based multilateral systems.

The consistent nature of our foreign policy has contributed to the respected stature which Canada enjoys in the world community. Its success in promoting and protecting fundamental Canadian interests and values has made our foreign policy a source of shared pride for Canadians.

In this decade of change, the importance of greater integration of Canadian foreign policy with the pressing domestic agenda – national unity, competitiveness and sustainable development – has never been higher.