

Quick Analysis – 2019 Mandate Letters

N.B. With the exception of the Minister of International Development, only select relevant excerpts of the mandate letters are shared below.

[Minister of International Development](#)

As Minister of International Development, you will lead Canada's efforts to reduce global poverty and inequality, provide humanitarian assistance, help the world's poor adapt to climate change, and support displaced persons, particularly with access to education.

Ed. – The emphasis on climate adaptation and access to education is new to this mandate letter relative to the last. Gone is the prior reference to focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable people across Canada's international assistance.

Core to your portfolio will be the **implementation of the Feminist International Assistance Policy**, which has made Canada the leading donor globally in support of gender equality, women's rights and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights.

I will expect you to work with your colleagues and through established legislative, regulatory and Cabinet processes to deliver on your top priorities. In particular, you will:

- Deliver Canada's international development assistance that increases every year towards 2030, reflecting our commitment to realizing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Ed. – This is a potentially significant commitment. But only future federal budgets will tell whether this represents a promise to increase Canada's official development assistance (ODA) in real terms. If funding rises with (or below) overall economic growth, Canada's ODA-to GNI ratio will continue to fall. As of 2019, Prime Minister Trudeau has the lowest average in this regard (0.28%) of any Canadian Prime Minister in 50 years – although ODA has never been higher in nominal dollar terms. Language in the last mandate letter on establishing a new funding framework to accompany the FIAP is gone – suggesting that the government either feels this has been done or is abandoning the concept.

- Implement the Feminist International Assistance Policy, which is geared and prioritized towards reducing poverty, including by creating opportunities for women on the ground in developing countries.
- Expand Canada's support for global education, including for the poorest and most vulnerable:
 - Invest at least 10 per cent of our bilateral international development assistance envelope on education; and
 - Lead an international campaign to ensure that all refugee and displaced children can get the education they need and deserve.

Ed. – This is a notable earmarking of education, building on Canada’s G7 leadership. According to the OECD, in 2017 Canada allocated 7% of bilateral ODA to education.

- Increase Canada’s collaboration on innovative financing with new and existing partners in civil society and the private sector, including through the continued implementation of initiatives that the Government has introduced, such as the International Assistance Innovation Program, FinDev Canada, the Sovereign Loans Program and the Equality Fund, and ensure they are fully aligned with Canada’s feminist approach to development.
- Improve the way we manage and deliver international development assistance to ensure greater effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

Ed. – The means for improvement are unclear but this could be an opening to advance a new Canadian aid effectiveness action plan – Canada hasn’t had one since 2012.

- Maintain the gender equality focus of all of Canada’s international assistance investments to address economic, political and social inequalities that prevent individuals from reaching their full potential.
- Develop additional programming on the intersection between women’s rights and climate adaptation in order to better support sustainable and equitable resource management, agricultural production and access to markets.

Ed. – While climate adaptation is a declared focus from the preamble, this is the first time it appears in the specific points. The focus on the intersection between women’s rights and climate adaptation is in line with the FIAP and sector advocacy around the role of women smallholders and other forms of women’s economic empowerment.

- Develop programming that recognizes, reduces and addresses the unequal distribution of paid and unpaid care work and that supports and protects the rights of paid and unpaid care workers to address a root cause of global inequality.

Ed. – This is a notable and to-be-defined area of work.

- Support the Minister of Foreign Affairs to establish the Canadian Centre for Peace, Order and Good Government.

Ed. – This was a platform promise. There is still ambiguity about what this Centre will do and how it may interact with other governance, human rights and democracy programs.

[Minister of Foreign Affairs](#)

As Minister of Foreign Affairs, you will advance Canada’s national interests in a **more unpredictable world** and lead Canada’s contribution to address fundamental global challenges. This will require a **principled approach that promotes Canada’s interests** including democracy, human rights, international law and environmental

protection. You will be responsible for expanding Canada's support for the **rules-based international order**, including by both reinforcing our engagement within existing institutions and placing Canada at the **forefront of global governance** on emerging issues. You are also responsible for la Francophonie.

- Expand Canadian diplomacy on global issues and in **international institutions**. We must maximize the Canadian advantage of being a member of the world's most vital multilateral institutions, continuing to be a strong voice for the rules-based order. You will:
 - Strengthen key bilateral and regional relationships, and **engage new partners** to address emerging challenges;

Ed. – The above language – marrying principles and interests in a complex world, upholding a rules-based international order, supporting multilateralism and global governance, and building partnerships – is consistent with the initial vision statement and many commentaries of the Summit on Canada's Global Leadership.

- Work with the Minister of National Defence to expand Canada's support for **United Nations peace operations, including with respect to new investments in the women, peace and security agenda, conflict prevention and peacebuilding**; and
- Lead Canada's United Nations **Security Council campaign**.

Ed. – Canada is continuing its Security Council campaign. With a substantially similar policy agenda but a significantly weaker ODA commitment relative to its competitors Norway and Ireland, Canada may struggle to win attention and support.

- In collaboration with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change continue Canadian leadership on international efforts to **combat climate change**.

Ed. – Oddly, multilateral climate action is not explicit in the mandate letter for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, though it does refer to binding targets for emissions which will presumably be in line with international commitments (see below).

- Increase Canadian support abroad for democracy, human rights, international law and freedom of the press. In this regard, you will:
 - Work with relevant Ministers to champion the values of **inclusive and accountable governance, including by promoting human rights, women's empowerment and gender equality, and respect for diversity and inclusion**;
 - With the support of the Minister of International Development, establish the **Canadian Centre for Peace, Order and Good Government** to expand the availability of Canadian expertise and assistance to those seeking to build peace, advance justice, promote human rights and democracy, and deliver good governance;
 - Build on the **Magnitsky sanctions regime** to ensure increased support for victims of human rights violations by developing a framework to

transfer seized assets from those who commit grave human rights abuses to their victims, with appropriate judicial oversight;

- **Reinforce international institutions** like the International Criminal Court, the World Trade Organization and others, including by providing additional resources to promote and uphold international law;
- Advance international efforts to ban the development and use of fully autonomous weapons systems; and

Ed. – This is a notable point, suggesting that Canada may look to champion a multilateral initiative on “killer robots” similar to the Ottawa Landmines Treaty.

- Lead on the coordinated implementation of Canada’s **women, peace and security agenda**, with support from Canada’s Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security.
- Ensure a close **link between foreign, defence, development and trade policy**.

Ed. – This is an important commitment to policy coherence at Global Affairs Canada. The need for this comprehensive approach, meeting the potential of an amalgamated department, was a key message at the Summit on Canada’s Global Leadership.

Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

- Introduce a **dedicated refugee stream** to provide safe haven for human rights advocates, journalists and humanitarian workers at risk, with a target of helping resettle as many as 250 people a year.

Ed. – It’s interesting to see humanitarian workers among the populations at risk targeted by this platform initiative.

Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

- Lead the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nations.

Ed. – Employment and Social Development Canada remains the government hub for 2030 Agenda implementation – but there is nothing specific here on a national strategy for implementation or pursuing whole-of-society approaches to this work.

Minister of National Defence

- Work with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to expand Canada’s support for **United Nations peace operations, including with respect to new investments in the women, peace and security agenda, conflict prevention and peacebuilding**;
- Expand Canadian defence cooperation and training assistance, in particular by drawing on the expertise of the Canadian Armed Forces to **help other countries at greater risk of disasters due to climate change**.

Ed. – This is an interesting conflation of military and development programming in the area of disaster risk reduction. Worth watching.

[Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development](#)

- Support the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Development in **continuing work on gender equality abroad**, including working with the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council and on global feminist initiatives.

[Minister of Environment and Climate Change](#)

- Lead government-wide efforts to develop a plan to set Canada on a path to achieve a **prosperous net-zero emissions future by 2050**. This includes:
 - Setting **legally-binding, five-year emissions-reduction milestones** based on the advice of experts and consultations with Canadians; and
- Work with the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard to introduce a new ambitious plan to conserve 25 per cent of Canada's land and 25 per cent of Canada's oceans by 2025, working toward 30 per cent of each by 2030. This plan should be grounded in science, Indigenous knowledge and local perspectives. **Advocate at international gatherings that countries around the world set a 30 per cent conservation goal for 2030** as well.

[Minister of Finance](#)

- Finalize a report, which will include a **list of federal fossil fuel subsidies** including the description of the subsidies, annual costs and analysis of the subsidies. This report will be made public once a peer review is finalized.

[Minister of National Revenue](#)

Ed. – There is no reference to charitable sector regulatory reform. Such language was in Minister LeBouthillier's prior mandate letter and set the stage for lifting restrictions on public policy activities by charities. Comprehensive reform no longer seems a priority.

[Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade](#)

- Advance Canada's trade agenda, pursuing **new agreements and opportunities** that create jobs and economic benefits for the middle class and those people working hard to join it.

[Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada](#)

- With support from the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, introduce co-developed legislation to implement the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** by the end of 2020.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

- Lead the conclusion of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement legislative process while continuing to oversee **Canada-U.S. relations**.