

Nov 04, 2016 by [Patrick James](#)

Costs Keep Diplomats at Home ^[1]

Today's turbulent world is one in which Canada's traditional role as a middle power or broker of interests is needed more than ever. 50 years ago Canada led the world in diplomacy, with the exclamation point coming with (eventual) Prime Minister Lester Pearson's key role in the Suez Crisis. Pearson served as an honest broker and set the standard for generations of Canadian diplomats to follow. Significant reductions in Canada's presence in this area constitute a setback to the country's traditional role within NATO and the world in general. We can hope, perhaps, that the great tradition of Canadian diplomacy will not be compromised by the changes noted in [this news release](#).

Canada has the lowest proportion of foreign service officers posted abroad of any G8 country, and some retired heads of mission say that's no surprise. Less than half of Canada's diplomats are actually working abroad because of budget constraints at the Department of Foreign Affairs, and many of the country's missions need millions of dollars worth of security upgrades, internal documents have revealed.

In a briefing package prepared for Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay when he took over the portfolio in February, senior staff outlined the challenges the department is facing because of what they describe as "financial restraint" over the past decade.

"Most officers ended up working mainly in headquarters, not because of policy needs, but because the incremental cost of postings abroad...made posting too expensive," the briefing states, adding each diplomat posted abroad costs up to \$300,000 per year.
