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# Normalizing Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions, and Sex Characteristics at the Global Level, from a Canadian Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

By developing its first Feminist International Assistance policy, Canada has positioned itself as an international feminist and diverse SOGIESC rights leader. However, the scarcity of references to sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) has raised questions on how these concepts were included in such a policy. This case study's objective is to better understand how Canadian policies play a role in including and normalizing diverse SOGIESC at the global level. We used documentary research, observations, and interviews to respond to that question. An abductive analysis was conducted, integrating a socio-ecological approach with emerging themes from the data. All socio-ecological levels were mobilized by Canadian actions toward SOGIESC normalization. Public policies were informed by a human rights-based approach and inclusive language. Canadian norms toward SOGIESC rights were conveyed within international communities by building bridges, positioning Canada as a political broker, while organizational resources remained limited. Individuals and their interpersonal skills were central in creating allyship through firsthand experiences. The importance of trans-partisanship and stronger coordination of soft power emerged as new and practical strategies responding to inclusion and normalization challenges. These strategies could represent important interactive spaces and leaders, in a context of rising conservative right-wing coalitions.

## KEYWORDS

Feminist policy; LGBTQI+; inclusion; international aid; foreign affairs; Canada

## Introduction

Canadian norms about SOGIESC issues (sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics) have greatly evolved during the last half century, through decriminalization and increased equity,

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diversity, and inclusion (EDI).<sup>1</sup> A 2023 pan-Canadian survey reported that Canada was a “good place to live for equity-seeking groups” and that its diversity was an important asset for the country (both answers: 78% of the respondents) (Abacus Data, 2023). While these Canadian EDI norms are widely present in the general population, organizational practices (Lyons & Christiancy, 2022), and national policies and laws, they can still be challenged by people with less familiarity with SOGIESC diversity, especially regarding the issues of children’s learnings and losses of rights and liberties (Abacus Data, 2023). However, national policies and judicial decisions have created important milestones, changing the realities of diverse SOGIESC communities. These national milestones have recently transpired into Canadian’s international policies, leading to the question of how Canadian norms are expanded from the domestic to the global level. This case study aims at better understanding how Canada uses its international policies to further include and normalize SOGIESC concepts in global governance. To do so, we will first contextualize Canadian norms through two chronologies illustrating the evolution of Canada’s domestic and international policies. Then, we will present the main organizations addressing SOGIESC diversity in regard to international policies. And finally, we will provide an overview of these policies.

### ***Domestic and international policies chronologies***

Various reforms aimed to normalize sexual orientation diversity: decriminalizing homosexual activities (1969) (Chambers, 2010), permitting entry for foreign homosexuals (1977) (Girard, 1987), forbidding discrimination based on sexual orientation (1996) (C-33: An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act 1997), and legalizing same-sex marriage (2005) (Supreme Court of Canada, 2005). Subsequent reforms concerned Trans\* and non-binary communities through inclusion of gender identity and expression as prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act in 2017 (Supreme Court of Canada, 2005). Reforms aimed at intersex populations are still to be made (Table 1). Compared to other countries, Canada has often been at the forefront of SOGIESC inclusion by adopting more equitable and progressive measures. For example, the province of Québec was the first jurisdiction to explicitly forbid discrimination based on sexual orientation (1977) (Jennex et al., 2020), and Canada was the fourth country to legalize same-sex marriage (2005) (C-38: An Act respecting certain aspects of legal capacity for marriage for civil purposes 2005) and to ban “conversion therapies” (2021) (C-4: An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy) 2021). Despite these achievements, it is worth noting an increased backlash, especially at a provincial level, with the examples of New Brunswick, Alberta, and Saskatchewan leading the way in restraining newly acquired rights (e.g.

**Table 1.** Chronology of SOGIESC in Canadian domestic policies.

Year	Subject	Milestones	Sponsors
1969	Decriminalisation of homosexual acts between consenting adults of 21+ in private	Bill C-150 assented: Criminal Law Amendment Act (Chambers, 2010)	Liberal Party of Canada (LPC), Minister of Justice (MoJ)
1974	First gay rights case at Supreme Court (refusal to print gay group advertisement in press)	Decision: Gay Alliance Toward Equality v. Vancouver Sun (Supreme Court of Canada, 1979)	Supreme Court of Canada (SCC)
1977	First interdiction to discriminate someone based on sexual orientation	Bill Q-88 assented: Charte québécoise des droits et libertés (Duplé, 1984)	Parti Québécois, MoJ
1977	Removal of an amendment made in 1953 preventing homosexuals entering Canada	Bill assented: Immigration Act (Girard, 1987)	LPC, MoJ
1985	First Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights	Released report: "Equality for All" (Boyer, 1985)	Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), Committee on Equality Rights
1992	Lifted ban on homosexuality in the Canadian Army	Settlement: Michelle Douglas vs Canadian army (unpublished?) (Douglas v. Canada, 1992)	Federal Court of Canada
1993	Acceptance of refugee applications based on sexual orientation	Decision: Canada v Ward (Canada v. Ward, 1993)	SCC
1993	Dissentation about the definition of "family" in the Canadian Human Rights Act	Decision: Canada v Mossop (Canada v. Mossop, 1993)	SCC
1995	Recognition of discrimination based on sexual orientation	Decision: Egan v. Canada (Egan v. Canada, 1995)	SCC
1997	Addition of sexual orientation in the Canadian Human Rights Act as grounds for protection from discrimination	Bill C-33 assented: Canadian Human Rights Act (C-33: <i>An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act</i> , 1997)	LPC, MoJ
1999	Recognition of common-law same-sex spouses	Decision: M v H (M. v. H., 1999)	SCC
2000	Elimination of the disparities between hetero- and homosexual common-law relationships	Bill C-23 assented: Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act (C-23: <i>An Act to modernize the Statutes of Canada in relation to benefits and obligations</i> , 2000)	LPC, MoJ
2002	Extension of immigration sponsorships for same-sex partners	Bill C-11 assented: Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (C-11: <i>An Act respecting immigration to Canada and the granting of refugee protection to persons who are displaced, persecuted or in danger</i> , 2002)	LPC, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
2002	First interdiction to discriminate someone based on gender identity	Bill NWT-1 assented: Human Rights Act (C-18: <i>Human Rights Act of Northwest Territories</i> , 2002)	Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly
2005	Redefinition of "indecent" in criminal law	Decision: R. v. Labaye (Supreme Court of Canada, 2005)	SCC
2005	Legalisation of same-sex marriage	Bill C-38 assented: Civil Marriage Act (C-38: <i>An Act respecting certain aspects of legal capacity for marriage for civil purposes</i> , 2005)	LPC, MoJ
2013	Ability for non-resident same-sex couples to divorce in Canada	Bill C-32: Civil Marriage of Non-residents Act (C-32: <i>An Act to amend the Civil Marriage Act</i> , 2013)	CPC, MoJ

(Continued)

**Table 1.** (Continued).

2016	First “Prime Minister’s special advisor on LGBTQ+ issues”	Appointment of Randy Boissonnault (2016–2019; mandate not renewed) (Government of Canada, 2016)	LPC, Privy Council Office (PCO)
2017	Addition of gender identity and expression in the Canadian Human Rights Act as protected grounds from discrimination	Bill C-16 assented: Canadian Human Rights Act ( <i>C-16: An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code</i> , 2019)	LPC, MoJ
2017	Creation of the LGBTQ2 Secretariat	Secretariat renewed as the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat	LPC, (PCO)
2017	Call for projects supporting LGBTQ2 communities	C\$250.000 funded (Government of Canada, 2017a)	LPC, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
2017	“ <i>Legalizing Love: The Road to June 27, 1969</i> ” project by Egale	C\$770.000 funded (Government of Canada, 2017a)	LPC, Canadian Heritage
2019	Expungement of convictions related to gross indecency and buggery.	Bill C-66 assented: Expungement of Historically Unjust Convictions Act ( <i>C-66: An Act to establish a procedure for expunging certain historically unjust convictions and to make related amendments to other Acts</i> , 2019)	LPC, Minister of Public Works and Government Services
2019	Repeal of sections: 159 [anal intercourse restricted for married heterosexuals aged 18 or older], 179(1)(b) [loitering], 287 [abortion], etc.	Bill C-75 assented: Criminal Code, Youth Criminal Justice Act, and other Acts ( <i>C-75: An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to other Acts</i> , 2019)	LPC, MoJ
2021	Ban on “conversion therapies”	Bill C-4 assented: Criminal Code ( <i>C-4: An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)</i> , 2021)	LPC, MoJ

the use of a preferred name and/or pronouns at school) (Khonina & Salway, 2024). While social movements regarding diverse SOGIESC communities are more commonly reported (Jennex et al., 2020), major political (green) and judicial (blue) events can be depicted as follows (CBC News, 2012; Nelligan Law, 2021; Queer Events, 2021).

While the Conservative governments (2006–2008; 2008–2011; 2011–2015) occasionally defended LGBTQ+ rights internationally (Epprecht & Brown, 2017) (Table 2), it is under the Liberal governments (2015–2019; 2019–2021; 2021–today) that Canada formalized its SOGIESC values internationally via more explicit orientations such as in the Foreign Affairs and International Development Ministers’ mandate letters: “expand Canada’s efforts to advance gender equality and LGBTQ2 rights abroad . . . continue to be a global leader in championing the rights of women and girls in all their diversity, LGBTQ2 people and other marginalized communities” (Prime Minister of Canada, 2021a) and “increase the annual investment in the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives to enable staff at Canada’s embassies around the world to support

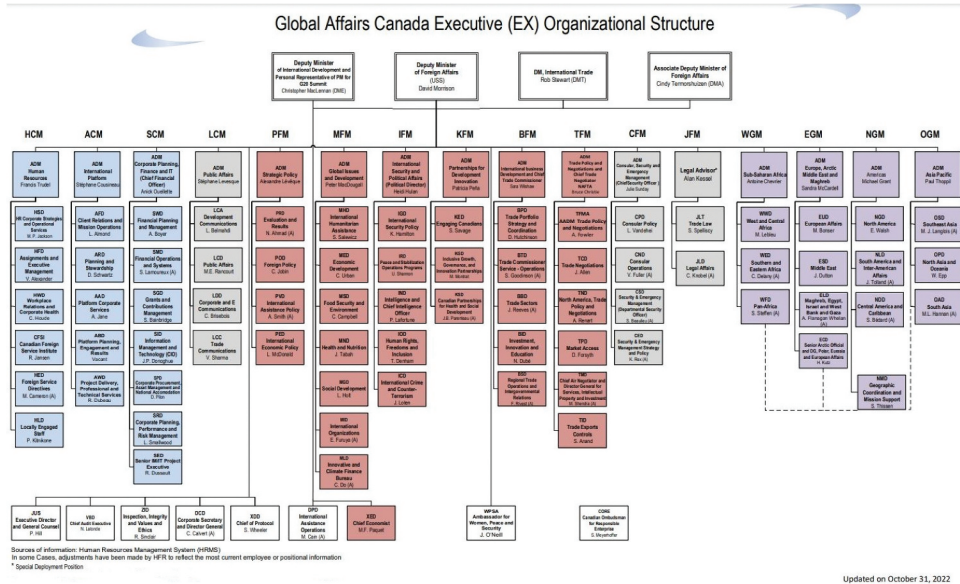
**Table 2.** Chronology of SOGIESC in Canadian foreign policies.

Year	Milestones	Sponsors from Foreign Affairs and other ministries
2009	Condemnation of Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda (Epprecht & Brown, 2017)	CPC
2011	– Co-sponsoring a resolution at the Human Rights Council for the protection of sexual minorities and the commission of a study on discriminatory laws and practices. – Mention of “gays and lesbians” at the UN General Assembly – Mention of “unacceptable” imprisonments in Eastern Europe at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (Epprecht & Brown, 2017)	CPC
2012	Speech at the UN General Assembly against the repression of gays and lesbians and criminalization of sexuality in Iran (Epprecht & Brown, 2017)	CPC
2014–17	C\$2.9 million for projects abroad supporting: violence-prevention programs, awareness campaigns, and advocacy efforts, (including initiatives aimed to combat homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia in education systems) (Government of Canada, 2017b)	CPC & LPC
2016	Successful negotiation for the mandate of the UN’s Independent Expert on SOGI	LPC
2017	Publication of Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy	LPC, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of International Development
2017–19	Co-chair of Equal Rights Coalition	LPC
2019	First funding (C\$30 million/5 years + 10 recurrent) dedicated to the LGBTQ2I International Assistance Program (Government of Canada, 2019)	LPC, Minister of International Development
2020	Announcement of a white paper and consultations for a future Feminist foreign policy	LPC
2022	Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022)	LPC, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth

the work of feminists, LGBTQ2 activists and human rights defenders” (Prime Minister of Canada, 2021b). Earlier mandate letters included the concepts of “inclusive governance,” “promoting human rights,” and “respect of diversity” without mentioning “LGBTQ2” populations; prior to the 2015 Liberal government, mandate letters remain unpublished.

### **Organizations around SOGIESC**

The main organization in charge of promoting Canadian norms abroad is Global Affairs Canada (GAC), which is a tricephalic Ministry made of the fusion of three departments: Foreign Affairs, International Trade, and International Development. The silos are still apparent today with three Ministers heading the Ministry and with “branches” often associated with the old departments (Figure 1 in (Global Affairs Canada, 2022)). To “expand Canada’s efforts to advance gender equality and LGBTQ2 rights abroad” (Prime Minister of Canada, 2021a), GAC works with the Women and Gender Equality Ministry (WAGE), which now hosts the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat. This secretariat was created in 2017 following the appointment



**Figure 1.** Organizational structure of GAC.

of Randy Boissonnault, to date only special adviser on LGBTQ2 issues to the Prime Minister. The Secretariat was first hosted within the Privy Council Office, then Canadian Heritage (Culture), and now WAGE. Its mandate was to recognize historical discrimination against the 2SLGBTIQ+ communities and now focuses on providing support on 2SLGBTIQ+ issues to other departments, such as GAC.

Results of this prioritization remain vague. According to the “Mandate letter tracker,” a website monitoring ministerial engagements, only the objective to “advance human rights, gender equality, peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity internationally” included SOGIESC issues (Privy Council Office, 2021). It mentions Canada’s leadership in co-chairing the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) from 2017 to 2019, holding its global conference in Vancouver (2018), and the creation of a C\$30 million fund (2019) toward SOGIESC rights.

**Canadian policies**

The first more tangible realization is the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) adopted in 2017, aiming at reducing gender disparities and empowering women and girls (Affaires mondiales Canada, 2017). Mention of sexual orientation and gender identity appears only four times, always within a listing on the basis of discrimination: “sex, race, ethnicity, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion,

language, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability or any other aspect of identity” (Affaires mondiales Canada, 2017). The FIAP draws on various concepts such as human rights, intersectionality, and the Sustainable Development Goals to establish six fields of action: (1) gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, (2) human dignity, (3) growth for all, (4) the environment and climate action, (5) inclusive governance, and (6) peace and security (Affaires mondiales Canada, 2017). However, the policy adopts a transformative perspective that focuses on the various inequalities experienced by women and girls principally, while keeping the door open for intersecting identities such as SOGIESC diversity; there are few mentions of diverse SOGIESC populations in the policy’s guidance notes (Global Affairs Canada, 2017a) and none in its indicators (Global Affairs Canada, 2017b). To operationalize this policy, in February 2019 the Canadian government announced C\$30 million for the LGBTQ2I International Assistance Program (5 years) (LIAP), with an additional C\$10 million/year (Affaires mondiales Canada, 2019; Champagne et al., 2019). The aim of this aid is to promote SOGIESC rights in countries receiving Canadian aid and to improve the socio-economic performance of these communities (Champagne et al., 2019). Of the C\$30 million, C\$10 million went to the “Agir ensemble pour l’inclusion/Act Together for Inclusion Fund! (AGIRI/ACTIF), administered by Equitas in partnership with Dignity Network Canada, which supports Canadian NGOs working on SOGIESC issues abroad in partnerships with local organizations. Five and C\$15 million are also planned, respectively, for multilateral aid (with leadership from diverse SOGIESC communities) and bilateral/multi-country aid (GAC #8).

A second realization is the “Canada’s First Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan” (2022), aiming at reducing discrimination against these communities (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022). Only one objective of six is dedicated to the defense of SOGIESC rights abroad, and little information is available about its operationalization and funding.

Finally, to go beyond the FIAP and include both foreign affairs and international commerce, Canada is now developing a new Feminist Foreign Policy. Consultations focused on how to design, implement and evaluate the future policy, and prioritize the emerging new issues (e.g. women, peace and security, new vulnerabilities, digital world) (Global Affairs Canada, n.d.).

While acknowledging the greater use of “feminist,” “intersectional,” and “inclusive” concepts in international policy documents, the superficial use of SOGIESC concepts raises the primary question of this article: How does Canada use its international policies (e.g. foreign affairs,



development aid) to further include and normalize SOGIESC concepts in global governance?

## Methods

To respond to this question, we conducted a qualitative case study (Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014) on the “exemplary” (Morgan, 2019) Canadian policies described above, to suggest ways forward for SOGIESC normalization at the global level. This study includes interviews ( $N = 33$ ), observations, and a document analysis, interpreted through a socio-ecological approach (Cislaghi & Heise, 2019; McLeroy et al., 1988).

### *Normalization through a socio-ecological approach*

The socio-ecological approach used in this case study is based on the early work of McLeroy et al. positioning health interventions within five dimensions: individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and public policies (McLeroy et al., 1988). These five different dimensions are interacting sites where interventions can facilitate change of behaviors and norms. Our socio-ecological approach is also inspired by the “Dynamic framework for social change” (Cislaghi & Heise, 2019), which operationalizes normalization in a developmental context abroad and helps identify more optimal ways to instill norms through the interactions of the different socio-ecological dimensions.

### *Interviews*

The first author (MS) conducted interviews from 04/03/22 to 16/02/23. A purposeful sampling strategy (Palinkas et al., 2015) was used to contact 12 potential participants based on their knowledge of Canadian international aid, their position within the government (e.g. GAC, WAGE), and their role around the FIAP. These contacts led to key informant informal interviews ( $n = 9$ ), formal in-depth interviews ( $n = 2$ ), and/or further snowball sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015) (Table 3). Snowball sampling helped recruit key informants for additional informal interviews ( $n = 8$ ) and formal in-depth interviews ( $n = 14$ ). Snowball sampling was necessary due to the lack of specific departments and branches working on SOGIESC (except the 2SLGBTIQ+ Secretariat outside GAC) and due to the intersectoral aspect of working on these issues. Interviews were virtual and lasted around 1 hour each. Informal interviews with key informants were not audio recorded and took the form of a conversation with note taking. In-depth interviews were audio recorded and were conducted with the help of an interview guide based on the interviewees’ relation with the FIAP, their work around SOGIESC, and their normalization

**Table 3.** Interview participants.

Affiliations	Interviews (formats and sampling methods)			
	Informal		In-depth	
	Purposive	Snowball	Purposive	Snowball
NGOs	3	4		3
GAC	1	1	1	8
Other departments	1		1	3
Academic experts	2	3		
Provincial ministries	2			
Total (N = 33)	9	8	2	14

(Appendix: Interview guide). The interview guide evolved during the case study, incorporating new information, exploring new elements, and adapting to each interviewee. Audio recordings and notes were transcribed *verbatim* either in French or English. French citations in this article were freely translated by MS.

### Observations

Observations took place during a two-day (23 & 24/11/2022) round table event in Ottawa, organized by Dignity Network Canada. Notes were taken during the variety of events by five notetakers, including MS, to be the basis of the event's report (Dignity Network Canada and Équitas, 2022). The event convened people from different organizations working toward worldwide SOGIESC recognition in the development sector. Organizations were NGOs from Canada, their international partners, and staff from the Canadian government.

### Documentary research

Documentary research aimed at identifying key documents around Canadian actions toward normalizing SOGIESC. Collected documents were mandate letters from key Ministries (e.g. Foreign Affairs, International Trade, International Development), documents related to the elaboration of the FIAP and its implementation, or documents related to the elaboration of a future Feminist foreign policy. Those documents were collected via governmental websites and through interviews (2021 to 2024) and were published from 2015 to 2024.

### Analysis

All transcripts, interview and observational notes, and documents were uploaded in the QDA Miner software to be thematically analyzed. An abductive analysis (an iteration of deductive and inductive analyses) was performed

with the creation of a coding tree based on the socio-ecological dimensions already well defined (Cislaghi & Heise, 2019; McLeroy et al., 1988) ([Appendix: Coding tree](#)) and new themes emerging from the collected data (Gläser & Laudel, 2013). Data were anonymized during the reporting phase through the utilization of codes to refer to participants (e.g. GAC#1).

## **Ethics**

Ethical approval was obtained from the *Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences et en santé* of the *Université de Montréal* (#2022–1384). This research followed institutional best practices regarding free, informed, and ongoing consent to participate, confidentiality, anonymity, and data protection. An information e-mail explaining the research was sent to all interviewees, information and consent forms were sent for all in-depth interviews, and participants of the round tables were informed by the organizers about the observations and note taking during the event and prior to the event.

## **Results**

Results are presented through different themes that emerged from a socio-ecological analysis (Individual, Interpersonal, Organizational, Community, and Public policies dimensions). Throughout these themes, a variety of practices can be identified as facilitators and barriers for the inclusion and normalization of SOGIESC diversity in global governance.

### **Individual**

At the individual level, personal discretion and the presence of diverse SOGIESC staff emerged as important themes characterizing Canadian international policies.

Social change around SOGIESC is highly influenced by an individual's discretion or “volume button” (GAC#1), which results in different levels of leadership and backing: “I will say that a lot of the action that has taken place has come from the direction of the Prime Minister. Like the apology, I know, like, for example, the Prime Minister was at the launch of the action plan” (Other ministries#1); “In terms of foreign policy, it's not up to me to decide that. I tell them [the team], ‘Listen, if we only do things on May 17th [International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia], we're useless’” (GAC#1); “If you look at the trajectory of LGBT rights internationally and who's kind of taken the lead on certain issues over the last 20 years, a lot of it is very personal. It's diplomats, gay or queer, or maybe had a queer kid, or who took

a particular interest, who really were willing to kind of go to bat for it” (NGO#1). Taking actions is therefore dependent on personal readings of legal contexts, social acceptability of SOGIESC diversity, and political needs. SOGIESC is not addressed systematically as a human right, leaving staff the decision to be vocal or not or to only address specific aspects of SOGIESC depending on the situation: “All heads of mission have among their objectives the importance of promoting human rights. I call it the ‘volume button.’ There are countries where having a discussion with the government on these issues is difficult. For example: our first thing with you, we’re going to talk about criminalization; and with you, you don’t criminalize, but you don’t recognize same-sex marriage. We will calibrate according to the country” (GAC#1); “some GAC staff understand the issues, are our allies, and need the information, data to be internal advocates; others will only do this if there is political pressure on them” (Observations 23/11/2022).

The place of diverse SOGIESC individuals within GAC has been facilitated through administrative processes being explicitly inclusive. Diverse SOGIESC diplomats now have access to accreditation details (diverse SOGIESC partners) before applying for employment abroad; there is the “Public Service Pride Network” and the “Champion” for SOGIESC issues supporting federal employees and sensitizing them about SOGIESC (Public Service Pride Network, 2023). Clear positioning around being an “inclusive environment” facilitates the hiring of diverse SOGIESC people abroad and improves Canada’s credibility as a “safer space:” “The posters include a mandatory paragraph that describes how we are an inclusive work environment that encourages diversity. I think the international branding is also quite well done in this regard” (GAC#2); “At our mission, I don’t think it’s a coincidence that we have a significant number of LGBTQ community members. Everyone who was a member of the community felt the need to tell me within the first three sentences. I wondered myself: ‘Why are they telling me all this?’ It’s because we have a hiring policy universally focused on the importance of supporting diversity” (GAC#1). While social contexts may be hindering, the increasing presence of staff with diverse SOGIESC is important to social change because it enables conversations on the issue and allows them to illustrate their experiences: “I’m very comfortable with drawing on my experience, and I’m fully confident that it is within Canadian policy parameters to do so . . . I got a lot of feedback from other people that were in the room at the time, which they appreciated me sharing: ‘It was really helpful to understand and this and that’” (GAC#3); “It opened some doors [being a lesbian]. Maybe there is more trust initially with groups or individuals who feel marginalized and at risk” (GAC#4).

## **Interpersonal**

In addition to the individual-level qualities discussed above, specific interpersonal skills were identified as factors influencing diverse SOGIESC inclusion and normalization in global governance: skill in deploying effective communication strategies and in building relationships between actors.

The interpersonal level is an important aspect of dealing with SOGIESC abroad. Diverse communication strategies have been identified to enable change at the diplomatic level. Key communication abilities were linked to these issues, such as humility, being understanding of negative attitudes, open to difference, and attentive to others' opinions. An important specificity about SOGIESC was linked to a desire to avoid conveying a message of moral superiority against anti-LGBTIQ+ perspectives: "We're guilty of this. Like sometimes the Western countries gang up on people and we look like jerks" (GAC#5); "Whenever I speak about LGBTI issues, I try to do two things. I try to ensure that I'm not sanctimonious, and I try to personalize it" (GAC#3); "When you point fingers, the question you need to ask yourself is, what is the objective I am seeking? Our goal here is to support community members and vulnerable communities so that gradually, acceptance, legislation, and integration of LGBTQ communities improve" (GAC#1); "So my first starting point is always sympathy and compassion for what may be somebody else's ignorance" (GAC#3). These abilities serve that objective toward change and can be used in interpersonal relationships to "convince," "see the position of others," and "direct attention:" "My goal is to convince my counterpart that it is in their best interest to agree with me" (GAC#1); "At the United Nations, not everything is translated into the five languages like before. So, when Canada has a resolution that is important to us, we create a working translation. However, for missions with fewer resources, such as those in West African countries with small teams, there's no one in their capital who will send them a translated version of the document. I say, 'Here's your working version. This will allow you to agree or disagree, but you will be able to see if you have a position, and then you can establish a stance'" (GAC#1); "I will try not to be the first person who speaks. Okay, let's try to wait until I hear a few other people. And then rather than reading whatever they [GAC headquarters] sent me and I will say: 'I just want to pick up on what we heard from Panama.' I guarantee you; Panama will be listening to me for the rest of what it is that I have to say. And I know that sounds like a minor thing, but when you go into the UN and you are 193 countries, all delivering statements, reading a little thing . . . The majority of people are on their phones and they're just like, you know, this and that. My whole job is to try to get a few good men to listen to what I'm going to say" (GAC#3).

Interpersonal relationships are important, as they go beyond policy work and imply human interactions: "I like that part . . . getting to know people,

getting to know him, well the guy, the candidate or the delegate, finding out ‘what would your headquarters think about this, and would they work with this?’” (GAC#5); “We don’t call it lobbying because usually lobbying is to get money or to change policies. But I’m trying to think, it’s really—it’s really outreach. And I would say networking. We are always working to build consensus. So, getting everybody to the same place” (GAC#5). This can be found both domestically and internationally: “I love that the dialogue with [Canadian] NGOs is much more constructive and positive than it has been in the past. So that’s encouraging. And I think it’s a bit the same for partners like ‘X & Y,’ who also see some good intentions” (GAC#6).

### **Organizational**

At the organizational level, barriers that can hinder inclusion and normalization processes include resource scarcity within a growing administration and difficulty to hire stable staff and retain their expertise.

GAC’s structure is complex and unintuitive due to different merges between the three Ministries: “Surely, there have been what we call in English ‘growing pains.’ There are clarifications needed regarding who does what and the tasks involved” (GAC#7). Work around SOGIESC issues can therefore be divided and lost between different offices. For example, the LGBTQ2I International Assistance Program (LIAP) is hosted within “Economic Development [direction] and then Natural Resources and Governance [division], so really [hesitations], it’s somewhat of a portfolio where [hesitations], obviously, there are connections between them, but perhaps not as much as within a single division” (GAC#7); and work on SOGIESC is mainly divided between two offices: “It’s confusing. . . The Bureau of Human Rights, Inclusion, and Freedoms was really under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The other focusses on development . . . the Bureau of Human Rights and Inclusion doesn’t include ‘freedom’ in its title” (GAC#7).

The LIAP is the first fund specifically targeting SOGIESC abroad. “This funding has really propelled Canada as a leader even though it is really a drop of water” (Observations 23/11/2022). “Compared to a lot of countries [Netherlands, Germany, UK], we do not put a whole lot of money into anything like international” (GAC#5). While more resources are made available, administrative requirements remain important for diverse SOGIESC organizations and can be perceived as externalized by GAC : “It’s too much’ . . . the feedback I received was: ‘If we had known ACTIF/AGIRI was like that, we wouldn’t have applied. . . but if there’s another call for proposals, we [Canadian LGBTQ+ organizations] will submit” (NGO#2); “We were told that ACTIF/AGIRI was like a darling initiative within GAC, but did that enable them to be more innovative since they weren’t accountable?

Currently, it's ÉQUITAS that is taking on 100% of the financial risks [since GAC sub-contracts partnerships with more at-risk partners]" (NGO#2).

"While we [NGOs] appreciate [the LIAP] because their dedicated funding for LGBT, we want to see those departments [GAC] integrate more LGBT work into their more mainstream funding" (NGO#1). These other sources of funding are programs in development assistance, peace, and stabilization (see the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan (Global Affairs Canada, 2024a)), and the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI). CFLI are one of the two priorities concerning SOGIESC rights abroad for the government, which aims to: "Increase the annual investment in the CFLI to enable staff at Canada's embassies around the world to support the work of feminists, LGBTQ2 activists, and human rights defenders" (Prime Minister of Canada, 2021b). They are managed by more than 120 embassies, described as "modest" (average of C\$31,000/project) with a total of C\$26.8 million, and do not prioritize SOGIESC systematically (of the 59 calls for proposals in 2024, 23 did not mention diverse SOGIESC populations, of which six did not include inclusive language) (Global Affairs Canada, 2024b). However, they are often used by diverse foreign SOGIESC NGOs that do not have the capacity to apply for bigger and more complex grants. The allocation of CFLI toward SOGIESC is hard to track due to financing being at the discretion of the ambassador, the reduced amount of administrative work and evaluation, and the use of broader terms ("social protection" or "economic rights") to describe the project for security reasons (Observations 24/11/2022).

In addition to funding, human resources (in Canada and abroad) are highly affected by staff turnover, which reduces institutional capacity to learn about SOGIESC. "People are in and out of these roles very quickly within the diplomatic service within Canada. So, the ambassador has been there for a few years, but all of the people that are supporting him, it might be their first OAS [Organization of American States] ever. It's a constant revolving door, not just at the OAS, at the UN, everywhere. Foreign diplomats move around all the time" (NGO#1). Another example occurred during Dignity Network Canada 2023 roundtables on the panel "Canada's current work to advance SOGIESC issues abroad:" two panelists admitted to only having been in their director position for 2 and 6 months. The third panelist explained this phenomenon: "We pack up every 2–3 years and we move. We live outside of the norms of society which is familiar to all of you" (Observations 24/11/2022). Civil society must then palliate for the government's lower expertise: "you're starting from scratch all over again. I mean, there's, you know, commitments that the countries have made and there's language already. But in terms of developing a relationship with them and seeing how positive they're going to be on LGBT issues or how strong they're going to be on those issues, it's like starting all over again" (NGO#1). Low staffing also influences Canada's (as well as other countries') ability to be more active abroad on different fronts: "If

I assume that in Canada it's a priority and we only have 75% of one person's time dedicated to this, I can imagine that in other countries, how are the portfolios divided. . . There's no one else in the ministry who [works in sectors X and Y, related to LGBTQ]. There are two persons who will work on LGBTQ development and there are a few others in the ministry who will do some here and there, but it won't be something that occupies them consistently" (GAC#8); "'X' and I are kind of equivalent, equivalent positions. So, since there aren't many people at GAC who are dedicated almost 100% to this issue—LGBTQ2I inclusion—we still work quite closely together" (GAC#7). This is also reflected domestically in relation to the coordinating 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat: "Especially now with the action plan, it is becoming more like people [other ministries] are turning to us to do their work, because they're working on something that relates to the communities. We don't have the capacity to do it. We put more stuff on hold. Especially because we should be 13 in our group and got currently [October 2022] four people . . . Two people left, 'X' got a job with [another organization], my manager got promoted and other people are on leave. So, they're gone for a few months . . . with the action plan, there's more money. So, more roles would be created" (Other ministries#2); "We had 'X' who was dedicated [to work with GAC]. He recently left for a new job" (Other ministries#1).

### **Community**

Building bridges is a preponderant need at the community level. This is relevant at the domestic level, through the relationship between government and diverse SOGIESC civil society, and at the international level, through the need to reconcile SOGIESC rights proponents and opponents.

Domestically, the community for the normalization of SOGIESC is mainly composed of Canadian NGOs working abroad, and the government. Both can seem at the antipodes—the former with expertise on SOGIESC experiences and underfunded compared to other international cooperation sectors (Observations 23–24/11/2022), and the latter with expertise in project management abroad and the need to limit spending. The relationship between them was tainted by years of homo-transphobic discrimination, an example being the "Purge" of diverse SOGIESC people from public services between 1950 and 90, and by "a very difficult relationship with the previous [conservative] government" (GAC#9). Mistrust is still present on both sides. The NGO community fears being misrepresented and firmly aims at being part of new steps forward: "wherever the Canadian government is active and engaged, we feel we should be there as kind of the watchdogs, but also to support the Canadian government when they're doing things right" (NGO#1); "we're kind of the content experts on SOGIESC [sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics] and LGBTI. They may not know



everything about LGBTI issues that have happened in other contexts [international institutions]” (NGO#1). The government, as funder, “enters into this relationship presuming there will be fraud, then aims to demonstrate that public funds go to projects that will succeed” (NGO#2).

Reconciliation is desired on both sides. The Liberal government made amends for diverse SOGIESC communities’ mistreatment during the Purge, including the appointment of a special adviser on LGBTQ2 issues (Government of Canada, 2016), official apologies to the LGBTIQ+ communities (Government of Canada, 2017), the creation of the “LGBTQ2” Secretariat (now 2SLGBTQI+), the funding of a C\$30 million for the LIAP, and the creation of its action plan (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022). In addition, a “Grants and Contributions Reform” is underway to address administrative dissatisfactions: “There is a major effort to reduce red tapes, administrative hurdles, and increase openness towards progressive principles, aiming for greater internal functionality and simplified processes” (GAC#6). On the NGOs’ side, Dignity Network Canada mobilizes more than 60 pro-LGBTIQ+ Canadian NGOs, while offering a more coordinated voice and clearer access to the government (e.g. organization of round tables (Dignity Network Canada and Équitas, 2022), personal connections). They now have access to the Canadian partnership window of the LIAP, through the ACTIF/AGIRI fund (C\$10 million), which was designed as “an opportunity to build the capacity of Canadian organizations to experiment with receiving public funding from GAC and eventually being able to directly approach GAC themselves” (NGO#2).

Canada works on SOGIESC issues cooperatively. Its main partners are European countries, with the Netherlands assuming a leadership role. Its area of influence for these issues follows a mix of regional, cultural, and political pathways: “For [IE SOGI], we managed to gain support from Latin America, which was the easiest part. We went through Cuba to approach Venezuela, as direct dialogue with them wasn’t feasible. After that, we aimed for Asia. Thailand seemed more accessible, but the Philippines posed challenges due to Duterte. So, we decided to skip them and focus on Sri Lanka, which might not be as difficult since they want to improve their image despite human rights issues. We’ll ask Portugal for support and target Portuguese-speaking countries like Mozambique” (GAC#1); “I know I have an issue with Hungary, so I’ll ask the Dutch to talk to the Hungarians” (GAC#1). Bilateral partnerships and direct contacts are important due to SOGIESC issues being underfinanced internationally: “The person in country ‘X or Y’ has LGBTQ issues to handle among 10 other tasks, so they may not have the time to be more engaged on this matter. . . If I write to them directly to ask if they want to be part of a working group, to come share their experience on. . . I don’t know. . . a recent policy that has come out regarding LGBTI people, they will

say yes, and they will jump at the opportunity, but you really have to take them by the hand. Many of them” (GAC#8).

Canada’s brokering role in promoting SOGIESC diversity is enabled by its bilingual status, lesser role in imperialist ventures, and positive stereotypes: “being Canada, we’re not part of Europe and we’re not part of the [United] States. Everybody thinks we’re nice” (GAC#5). This position is important to ensure representation across regions and greater legitimacy. For example, being part of the Francophonie helps reach North, West, and Central African countries, while being part of the Commonwealth helps reach East and Southern African and Asian countries, as well as the English-speaking Caribbean. This brokering role therefore implies valorizing other countries in taking the leadership role: “Canada and Thailand have been very big advocates for U equals U [notion of HIV being Undetectable, thus Untransmissible]. And we knew that it would be stronger coming from Thailand if they proposed it than if Canada did” (GAC#5); “we focus on the middle countries. So, the ‘Cameroons,’ you know, they don’t speak up much” (GAC#5). It also extends to diverse SOGIESC communities abroad: “If there are countries where the LGBTQ community is highly marginalized or their lives are in danger, we will provide them with collaboration platforms or say: Come to us [embassies], it’s a safe space, come meet people, come meet the Netherlands, come meet countries where this dialogue is possible so that. . . they can receive training, receive support, and not feel isolated” (GAC#1).

### **Public policy**

Finally, Canadian international policies can be characterized through three main aspects: the centrality of human rights, a diversity of inclusive/normalizing actions, and a pragmatic approach to in policy negotiation.

As described earlier, Canadian policies remain nonspecific and open for interpretation regarding SOGIESC: “We don’t have a lot of direct leverage, no very solid hooks. But we have the indirect approach, saying that it’s a human rights-based approach” (GAC#6). “It’s there. It’s implicit in the intersectional approach. And there’s a little bit of it in the policy. The document, it becomes too unfocused after a while, if you have too many qualifications of things” (GAC#9). SOGIESC are therefore included in human rights protection efforts, such as in the tool “Voices at risk: Canada’s guidelines on supporting human rights defenders,” which provides a dedicated appendix for SOGIESC human rights defenders (Global Affairs Canada, 2017c). The role of policy implementers (e.g. diplomats, project managers) then involves being a watchdog for the respect of SOGIESC rights: “We need to steer towards the universality of rights. . . we have to tell a country: ‘You have signed onto the ICCPR, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so you have a responsibility to your citizens to implement these rights’” (GAC#1). This role is enabled by Canada’s

credibility pertaining to SOGIESC: “Canada is truly seen as an interlocutor that addresses these issues frankly, and we recognize that we haven’t always been perfect. However, at the same time, we are well positioned to engage with others and say, ‘There is progress to be made on this’” (GAC#1); “I don’t have to actually articulate Canadian policy on LGBTI. Like, who is that going to surprise?” (GAC#3).

Canada’s participation in creating international policies is mainly through intergovernmental organizations such as the UN, OAS, or the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC). Its participation is seldom in a leadership position, but rather within multilateral groups (e.g. cochair of ERC with Chile; member of the UN LGBT core group). Diplomatic actions in collaboration with national NGOs, such as Egale Canada, have resulted in the founding of the LGBTI Core group within the OAS (Organization of American States, 2016) and the creation, and renewal, of the mandate for the UN Independent Expert on Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (IE SOGI).

For example, one participant described concrete actions to promote SOGIESC rights in some detail: “I’m looking into whether there’s a way to include language or text on these issues in resolutions. Unfortunately, there aren’t many opportunities, often because there is a lot of pushback. Several countries do not accept these proposals, so regardless, we try to push for this language” (GAC#8). Different forms of inclusive language are used such as: “the acronym LGBT-LGBTI is most commonly used in an international context, or suppose there’s a paragraph on violence or discrimination, we’ll say based on, and we’ll use SOGI language: sexual orientation and gender identity” (GAC#8), and are ranked: “SOGI will always be our first preference, and LGBTI as well, both of them. When we face pushback, we try to soften the language. For example, when there’s text about ‘Women and Girls,’ we might try to say, ‘Women and girls, in all their diversity,’ or alternatively, ‘all women and girls’” (GAC#8).

The Canadian approach to negotiation for SOGIESC can be described as pragmatic, aiming at consensus while focusing on results: “How can we educate, even if it’s about one person, and how can we bring them along gently? I think that’s a big role that Canada plays . . . That behind-the-scenes role for Canada is to find that consensus, to bring people together” (GAC#5); “Promoting change has to be born from a place of sympathy and understanding and giving people the time and space to come to their own conclusions and demonstrating openness and understanding while being firm” (GAC#3); “The Scandinavians and I have always had a debate about this. They say, ‘I want it to be as aspirational as possible. If it’s not adopted, it doesn’t bother me, but we should be as demanding as possible.’ . . . ‘Oh, you’re not demanding enough.’ We’re

not demanding enough, but I want it [resolutions] to be adopted” (GAC#1).

### **Discussion: Strategies to move forward**

Key practices influencing global governance changes for SOGIESC rights can be identified within Canadian policies across five socio-ecological settings (Table 4). These practices represent various facilitators and barriers in consolidating Canada’s role in supporting SOGIESC diversity in global governance.

Looking at these practices from various socio-economic levels, two intersecting strategies for maintaining and increasing the national commitment to, and global influence of, progressive SOGIESC policies emerged from this study: a need to transcend polarization between “pro-LGBTIQ+” and “anti-gender/pro-family” actors, and creating mandated and resourced coordination to sustain influence and maintain some arms-length from domestic political dynamics.

#### ***Transcending “we vs. they”***

The appropriation of SOGIESC diversity by more progressive groups (e.g. Liberal Party of Canada or Global North coalitions) can polarize the political environment, dividing it into two, where one side identifies as pro-LGBTIQ+ and the other “against.” We can find this situation at both domestic and international levels. In Canada, the clear positioning of the Liberal government around social issues (e.g. abortion, same-sex marriage, medical assistance in dying) has led more socially conservative liberals to leave the boat and rejoin other conservative groups (Besa, 2020). Members of right-wing groups (e.g. People’s Party of Canada) also use anti-LGBT rhetoric (e.g. about an alleged LGBT lobby to corrupt children) as implied proxies for broad anti-Trudeau/anti-Liberal positions (e.g. corruption and “Trudeau-Liberal” destruction of Canadian values) (Momani & Deschamps, 2021). Many interviewees mentioned their fear of possible revocation of the FIAP by a future conservative government. This is what happened in Sweden, which was the first country to adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy (2014) and to revoke it (2022). The need to palliate national security threats (e.g. Russia’s war in Ukraine), the “fact the Swedish foreign policy must be based on Swedish values and Swedish interests” (center-right Minister for Foreign Affairs cited in (Walfridsson, 2023)), the inability to see clear results from the policy, and incoherence within the policy (e.g. weapon exports while empowering women in peace and security programs) were the main reasons for its revocation (Walfridsson, 2023). These reasons could be transposed to the Canadian context: commitments to increased military spending to reach the North Atlantic Treaty



**Table 4.** Socio-ecological synthesis.

	Personal	Interpersonal	Organizational	Community	Public Policies
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Importance of LGBTIQ+ individuals and allies in taking leadership</li> </ul>				
Interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Communication abilities needed for change (humility, supportiveness)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Communication strategies employed (convincing, clarifying, sharing, “preaching”)</li> </ul>			
Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Importance of (one-on-one) relation building</li> <li>– Staff rotation hindering expertise creation and retention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Organizational openness to LGBTIQ+ issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Variety of organizational contexts at the international level</li> </ul>		
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In/formal networks of LGBTIQ+ people in GAC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Dosage communication in different contexts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Credibility of Canada at the international stage on LGBTIQ+ issues</li> <li>– Priority of LGBTIQ+ issues for foreign policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Organizational relations characterized by mistrust</li> </ul>	
Public Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Personal interpretations linked to LGBTIQ+</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Interrelations with other countries defined as “open,” “compromising,” or “baby steps” and less as leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Push toward inclusive language</li> <li>– Use of human rights-based rhetoric</li> </ul>

Organisation's target of 2% of the gross domestic product (National Defence, 2024) or that "GAC is unable to show the value of Canada's international assistance in support of gender equality" (Auditor General of Canada, 2023).

Internationally, new coalitions are forming around "anti-gender" or "pro-family" movements, which stand against more progressivist issues such as LGBTIQ+ rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and comprehensive sexuality education. Like pro-LGBTIQ+ coalitions, the anti-gender agenda is also largely funded from the Global North. Key lobbyists in foreign governments and within the UN are linked to United States' and Russia's more conservative churches (McEwen & Narayanaswamy, 2023). Global North countries also contribute to the backlash against SOGIESC's rights, through inappropriate diplomatic actions or funding of pro- or anti-LGBTIQ+ actions and organizations. For example, the United Kingdom considered to make aid conditional on the decriminalization of homosexuality; this was perceived as a neo-colonial violation of national culture and identity in Uganda and Tanzania, among others (Symons & Altman, 2015). In Uganda alone, since 2014, more than US\$75 million were given to different anti-LGBTIQ+ churches, from key pro-LGBTIQ+ governments, members of the ERC; Canada funded C\$1.3 million to the (Anglican) Church of Uganda which protests against SOGIESC rights openly (Provost, 2023). While this amount appears small, it does account only for one country and does not account for domestic funding of anti-LGBTIQ+ organizations (e.g. tax credit for Canadian anti-LGBTIQ+ churches with missions abroad). Canadian NGOs are taking the lead in addressing anti-LGBTIQ+ funding but acknowledge the lack of information and opacity of the issue (Observations 24/11/2022).

These examples demonstrate the importance of improving communication and cooperation between the two sides of the rift. In 2015, the first "All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global LGBT+ Rights" was created in the United Kingdom (UK). In 2022, it united around 100 members from the upper and lower houses, and from various political parties (e.g. Conservative, Labour, Liberal-democrats, Scottish National Party) (UK Parliament's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global LGBT+ Rights, 2019). In 2019, this concept of transpartisanship was taken at an international level with the creation of the "Global Equality Caucus," which counted 473 national parliaments' members from all world's regions. Following meetings between Global Equality Caucus members, this initiative has spread to Canada in 2022 with the creation of the "Canadian Pride Caucus" (Global Equality Caucus, 2022). This caucus is formed of 10 members: four Liberal ministers, three New Democrats, two independent senators (appointed by a Liberal government), and one Conservative. While links with conservative politicians still need to be strengthened, the creation of transpartisan spaces seems essential to share experiences (nationally and globally), support SOGIESC rights, and engage with diverse SOGIESC communities.

### ***Strengthening Canada's soft power***

On the international scene, Canada lacks coordination and could offer more systematic action. The 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat is an important coordinating actor domestically but lacks expertise and interaction with diverse SOGIESC actors abroad. Canadian NGOs have been vocal about the creation of a Canadian “Special Envoy” to enhance Canada’s credibility, mandate a clearly identified interlocutor, and to better coordinate with the international movement for SOGIESC rights (Dignity Network Canada, 2022). This demand was central in discussions between Canadian NGOs and the government and was present in various panels during the 2022 roundtables (Observation 24/11/2022) (Dignity Network Canada and Équitas, 2022). Only a few countries have Special Envoys working internationally (United States [2015], Italy [2021], United Kingdom [2021], Argentina [2022], France [2022], Germany [2022]). The creation of a Special Envoy transcends all socio-ecological settings and is therefore an important action lever. Special Envoys are visible diverse SOGIESC individuals or allies with clear experiences to share (e.g. Alba Rueda is the Argentinian Special Envoy and a transgender woman). They create a space for interactions between individuals, organizations, and governments (e.g. roundtables of the IE SOGI (Madrigal-Borloz & UNHCR, 2021), conferences, and meetings). They also meet policy-makers, such as transpartisan groups or allies. While mandates of special envoys are different one country from another, the role of a Canadian Special Envoy and their team could be central in strengthening different areas of Canadian foreign policy around SOGIESC: coordinating actions from different Canadian departments (e.g. GAC, WAGE), strengthening actions within diverse multilateral organizations (e.g. OAS, the UN, the Commonwealth), implementing the Federal 2SLGBTIQ+ action plan, and ensuring clear communication channels with domestic and international diverse SOGIESC organizations (Dignity Network Canada, 2022). Refusal to create such mandate in Canada has created a feeling among Canadian NGOs that the Liberal government has been taking SOGIESC issues hostage for political gains and a positive image in the more progressive population (Observations 23/11/2022). Creating a stronger coordinating mandate, such as a Special Envoy Office, could mean letting go of a certain control over discussions and the SOGIESC agenda (Observations 23–24/11/2022) but could also provide an interesting space for transpartisanship and innovative re-grouping around SOGIESC.

## **Limitations**

Many factors limited recruitment of participants: the paucity of staff dedicated to SOGIESC within the government, the complexity of the organizations, and the dispersion of staff across a variety of departments, divisions, and offices. Of 51 people contacted (with two follow-up e-mails), only 16 participated in recorded interviews and 17 in informal interviews. Eighteen people (11 from GAC and four from other departments) did not wish to participate (by not being the “right” person or not having time). These people were all referred through snowball sampling by another participant after having performed a recorded informal interview. These methodological limitations were mitigated using triangulation methods to reach saturation and identify processes in implementing policies (e.g. documentation and web research). The “LGBTIQ+ researcher status” might also have created a social desirability bias during data collection since the author perceived different participants’ need to address the insufficient but hard work around the inclusion of SOGIESC. Again, the triangulation of data collection methods provided clearer insights into civil society’s expectations and relationship with the government (through observation). This facilitated the interpretation of certain positions expressed in interviews.

## **Conclusion**

This case study about Canadian international policies provides important insights about practices linked to the inclusion and normalization of SOGIESC diversity in global governance. Results show that Canada’s international policies are often pragmatic (e.g. based on a “baby steps” and human rights approaches), that they are implemented in a polarized context (whether domestically or internationally) with various organizational barriers, and that the role of individuals is preponderant in their implementation. With anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ+ movements on the rise, in Canada and internationally, new strategies must be implemented and coherent with this evolving context. The socio-ecological approach used in this case study helps us find such multi-level strategies, such as providing space for more transpartisanship and better coordination of soft power. While much work has been done to include and normalize SOGIESC diversity in Canada and globally, international policies must be redesigned to engage with the complexity of our world and address the way we live policies, as individuals, interrelations, organizations, and communities.



## Note

1. Different terminologies are used in this case study to address the concepts of sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (e.g. SOGIESC or SOGIESC diversity referring to non cisgenderism, heterosexuality, and endosexuality), and the populations living that diversity (e.g. diverse SOGIESC people, LGBT, LGBTIQ+, 2SLGBTQI+). Different terminologies refer to different points in time and levels of inclusion throughout history. They also refer to a specific Canadian setting (2SLGBTQI+), where 2S (two-spirits) are mainly acknowledged domestically, while absent at the international level.

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## Appendix Interview guide

[BEFORE starting the interview:

- Review the contents of the information sheet
- State the objectives of the research
- Explain how the interview will be conducted (approximately 1 hour, face-to-face, recorded)
- Inform participants that they may interrupt the interview or not answer certain questions
- Specify that the study is confidential
- Obtain verbal consent from participants
- Introduce the sections of the interview: Presentation, Representation in governance, Normalisation
- Answer participants' questions
- Note the participants' details (role, gender, organisation) and the time.

START RECORDING]

### *Stakeholder context*

- Role of the interviewee
  - Title
  - Assigned duties/projects
- Role of the organisation/department
  - Mission/roles
  - Types of projects/activities
  - Types of LGBTIQ+ issues concerned by these projects/activities
- Collaborations
  - Key collaborators
    - Types of collaboration
    - Affiliated organisations
  - Barriers to collaboration
    - Specificities in relation to LGBTIQ+ issues

### *Role in PAIF-C (C-FIAP) or LGBTIQ+ Action Plan*

- Role of the interviewee in the development of the PAIF
  - Defining/placing on the agenda
  - Formulation
  - Adoption

- Implementation
- Evaluation
- Other stakeholders in the development of the PAIF (who does what and how)
- Specificities in relation to LGBTIQ+ issues

#### *Normalisation of LGBTIQ+ issues*

- In PAIF
  - What LGBTIQ+ issues are included in the PAIF?
  - Existence of inclusion standards
  - Who are the 'entrepreneurs' seeking to raise or lower these standards?
  - Who are the leaders to be convinced
  - Barriers/Facilitators to changing standards (increasing/decreasing)
- In the international community
  - What LGBTIQ+ issues are addressed in the international community?
  - Existence of inclusion standards
  - Who are the 'entrepreneurs' seeking to raise or lower these standards?
  - Who are the leaders to be convinced
  - Barriers/Facilitators to changing standards (increasing/decreasing)

#### *Future research*

- Contacts/Key documents
- Participation un further research

[END of interview :

- Note time
- Acknowledgements and answers to questions
- Request for access to documents cited during the interview
- Notes taken by the researcher (interview, progress, impressions, technical problems, interruptions, places and unrecorded exchanges]

## Appendix Coding tree

