



- ❖ obtain copies of records of long-distance calls that the abducting parent may have made prior to the abduction;
  - ❖ suggest the publication of an INTERPOL circular;
  - ❖ if your child has chronic medical problems or is on regular medication, contact the physician and/or hospital that treated your child and request their co-operation should there be a request for information concerning your child; here, too, you may need to provide a certified copy of your custody order;
  - ❖ if there are common credit cards or joint bank accounts, check your liability for transactions made by the abducting parent and take appropriate action.
- ❖ The request for assistance must come from the investigating police department, the provincial/territorial central authority or the Consular Affairs Bureau.
  - ❖ The requesting agency is responsible for assessing the financial status of the family and determining if free transportation and accommodation should be provided.
  - ❖ The service is only available to return a child abducted by a parent.
  - ❖ The requesting agency must ensure that all necessary documents for the return of the child to Canada are in order.
  - ❖ A parent or guardian will not be sent overseas unless all legal steps have been taken for the return of the child to Canada and the local authorities are co-operating in the return.

### **3. The Canadian Government "Our Missing Children" Program**

This program involves four federal government departments: the RCMP's Missing Children's Registry; International Project Return, a program of the Customs Border Services Branch of Revenue Canada; Citizenship and Immigration Canada; and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The four elements operate as one unit under one roof, at RCMP headquarters in Ottawa. The program's objective is to locate and return abducted children.

Following a request from the local police, Customs officers can immediately have a border alert distributed to the member countries of the International Customs Union. The RCMP component, the Missing Children's Registry, is associated with the global police network INTERPOL, through which it will assist any Canadian police agency in co-ordinating investigations abroad.

Among the services offered through the RCMP's Missing Children's Registry is the Travel Reunification Program, which is designed to help parents or guardians who cannot afford to pay the cost of having an abducted child returned to Canada. This program is supported by Air Canada, Canadian Airlines International, Via Rail and Choice Hotels Canada Inc. They will provide transportation and accommodation, if they serve the relevant locations. To qualify for travel assistance, the following guidelines must be met:

### **4. The Media**

Publicity can be both helpful and detrimental in international child abductions. It is important, therefore, that you discuss the matter of publicity with your local police and/or your lawyer. Insofar as publicity overseas is concerned, you should discuss the matter with the Consular Affairs Bureau. In some countries, publicity could affect the willingness or ability of local authorities to assist in the return of your child. It may also cause the abducting parent to go into hiding and, in so doing, create further stress and danger for your child.

### **5. Search Agencies**

A number of private organizations will carry out search activities on your behalf for a fee and/or expenses. You should obtain advice and guidance from professionals, including the local police and non-governmental organizations (see Part D of Section VI for addresses), before engaging such agencies to act on your behalf. If you do decide to engage such an organization, it is important to have your lawyer involved in any negotiations, to protect your financial interests and to ensure that the proposed activities do not further complicate the search for and recovery of your child.