

priorities to reflect the needs of the government. The priorities of the Department, both at headquarters and in our missions abroad, must be the priorities of the government as a whole. Without priorities, a foreign office can become haphazardly and indiscriminately involved in all aspects of international relations. We must select or recommend issues for priority attention, and allocate and manage our resources accordingly. What is required is a thorough knowledge of government and of the international environment which gives us a sense of what is important and what is not. The international economy, national unity, certain bilateral relationships, human rights and energy diplomacy are clearly of major concern. At the same time we must ensure that less prominent issues are not lost from sight under the pressures of the current agenda.

The exercise of leadership is complemented by the provision of service to the Canadian foreign policy community inside and outside the federal government. We must try to ensure that all those who contribute to policy formulation — e.g. parliamentarians, provincial officials, journalists, academics, business or labour leaders — receive foreign affairs information and services tailored to their individual needs. Thus, under the authority of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, we provide briefings on foreign policy issues to parliamentarians. We have also made special efforts recently to improve the quality and timeliness of the foreign-policy information flow to other departments, and of this and other services to those outside the federal government. In whatever we do to provide service, we are conscious of the fact that, in an open society like ours, the interests and concerns of the public as a whole must be reflected in foreign policy.

The Department's authority to act as a central agency is supported by a combination of formal credentials and informal arrangements. The formal credentials include legislation, Orders-in-Council pursuant to legislation and in exercise of the Royal Prerogative, an array of Cabinet decisions and directives, and an extensive body of custom and precedents. I regard as of prime importance the authority of the Secretary of State for External Affairs to sign all submissions to Council concerning international agreements of a binding nature, and to approve and make recommendations to Cabinet on the size and composition of delegations to international conferences.

Although there is no doubt that the Government regards the Department as a central agency, our efforts to exercise this authority run into problems which differentiate External Affairs from other central agencies. A comparison with the Treasury Board demonstrates this difference. Treasury Board oversees and controls the budget expenditures for all government departments and agencies, and establishes the administrative policies of the government as an employer. Government departments and agencies do not have a choice whether to go through Treasury Board. All budget estimates must go through the Board, which co-ordinates the estimates and exerts considerable control on their final form before they are passed on to Parliament.

Given the relative lack of formal levers of mandatory control over the international activities of other departments and agencies, the Department must, if it is to fulfil its

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