

Profile: Department of Foreign Affairs Department of International Trade

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) has represented Canada abroad through a network of 270 embassies, high commissions, consulates-general, consulates and satellite offices in 180 countries. Its objectives were to promote prosperity, ensure Canadians' security within a global framework, and promote Canadian values and culture on the international stage. On December 12, 2003, the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, transferred some portions of DFAIT to a new Department of International Trade. Until the mandates of the two Departments are defined, it must be assumed that the division of responsibilities has neither added to, nor detracted from the previously undivided DFAIT mandate, the description of which follows.

The legal mandate of DFAIT was set out in the *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Act R.S.C. (1985)*. Under this Act, DFAIT was empowered to conduct Canada's international relations, coordinate Canada's economic relations and promote international trade, foster the development of international law, and provide assistance to Canadians abroad. Four main roles flowed from this mandate: developing and coordinating the government's international policy; advocating Canadian interests and values overseas; providing assistance to Canadians, including trade, investment, passport and consular services; and supporting other government departments (OGDs) and agencies overseas.

The strategic direction given to the DFAIT mandate and role came from the three key objectives of Canada's foreign policy set out in the Government's 1995 statement, *Canada in the World*:

- the promotion of prosperity and employment by advancing Canada's international trade and economic interests abroad, by maintaining market access for Canadian goods and services, by attracting foreign investment, and by promoting tourism to Canada;
- the protection of our security within a stable global framework by using diplomacy to protect against military threats, international instability, environmental degradation, natural resource depletion, international crime, uncontrolled migration, and the spread of pandemic diseases;
- the projection of Canadian values and culture in the world by promoting universal respect for human rights, the development of participatory government and stable institutions, the rule of law, sustainable development, the celebration of Canadian culture, and the promotion of Canadian cultural and educational industries abroad.

Within this policy framework, DFAIT took into account numerous significant external factors affecting the Department's operations. Chief among these was global integration and interdependence, threat reduction and international terrorism, growing public expectations and concerns, and the nature of government commitments to international organizations and international events.

Besides meeting the challenges of external events beyond its immediate control, DFAIT also participated in a very broad range of domestic and international activities within the limits of its mandate and resources. Reinforcing awareness of the links between foreign and domestic interests such as Canada's commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, building on opportunities for addressing emerging and traditional challenges as in the Africa Action Plan, and promoting our interest in safeguarding international peace and human security are but a few of the areas where DFAIT has played a major role and where the two Departments will continue to do so.

More information on the DFAIT strategic planning and priorities framework is available at: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/department/mandate/sppf-en.asp>