

A final factor that affects service quality is the principle of universality. At present, TCs are expected to respond to all enquiries and requests, without regard for the type of company or situation. TCs set their own priorities for handling their work, but this is always a judgement call that can be questioned. Further, such a system almost invites inconsistencies across officers and posts. DFAIT might consider stating more explicitly the priorities that will guide the work of TCs. This would explain the services that TCs will provide for business, what priorities will be accorded various types of request/company, and what standard of service is to be expected (type of response and time-frame). The statement should also be explicit about services that TCS will not provide for business. If DFAIT were to make such a statement, it would remove considerable pressure from individual TCS and help set consistent operational standards.

WORK CONDITIONS AND/OR WORK CLIMATE

Work overload and service quality concerns are matters that specifically relate to the effectiveness of the Canadian TCS. More general, but no less important to improved TCS effectiveness, are certain contextual factors which go to the heart of the TC's conditions of employment.

The more significant items of TC concern are:

- Salary level/freeze
- Promotion system
- Generational issues
- Trade development versus trade policy
- Bureaucratization
- Morale

TC salary levels do not match those in the private sector. This means that DFAIT's pool of potential recruits is largely made up of those for whom salary is not a prime consideration. By freezing what were already lower salaries, however, government has automatically focused greater attention on this aspect of TC employment. This is made all the more acute since the very factors that historically have offset lower salaries—the interesting and satisfying nature of the work, and the foreign postings—have come under threat with increased workloads and fewer postings abroad. The salary discontent is reputed to be greatest among officers who did not join the TCS directly from university, and feel their salaries do not reflect level of experience and, more particularly, language and technology competence. Promotion is another major issue. With a contracting public service, the number of positions that are available for promotion has been reduced.

Two items have been subsumed under the heading “generational issues.” The first concerns the “greying” of the TCS. A sizeable number of TCs will be retiring over the next 10–12 years and, with the limited promotion and foreign posts now available, many are more