

*The Political Officer
in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade*

PROPOSAL: Missions with heavy visits workloads should be invited to submit proposals on the feasibility and cost of hiring professional visits coordinators.

PROPOSAL: A Visits Management manual should be developed to provide advice to missions on preparing and executing visits plans. The manual should include guidelines for missions on the level of service to be offered various categories of visitors, and should stipulate the circumstances under which missions should request supplementary resources from Ottawa to deal with situations beyond the mission's capabilities.

PROPOSAL: The department should prepare and distribute a booklet, approved by the Minister, advising Members of Parliament and provincial leaders of the level of services they can expect to receive from Canadian missions abroad.

Briefing books

- The 1996 departmental study on briefing books proposed that every book begin with a strategic overview for the meeting, not normally to exceed one page, intended to "guide the reader to what is at stake and what we can expect to achieve". If the reader is thoroughly familiar with the issues, the overview may be all that is required. The key was to take care in selecting issues for the agenda and to ensure that the other side abided by the agenda. Directors should personally approve the strategic overview.
- PSE has adopted a briefing system for ministerial discussions which limits the documentation to (a) one or two pages of bullets on issues to raise, (b) a two-page background brief, and (c) a biographical sketch of the interlocutor.

PROPOSAL: Deputies should issue instructions on the preparation of briefs which satisfy the criteria of the 1996 study i.e. a negotiated agenda, clarity of objectives, a scenario brief containing the essentials, and supporting briefs limited to items on the agenda. Deputies should hold directors accountable for the quality and timeliness of briefs.

PROPOSAL: The department should prepare briefs according to a standard format. Briefs should be prepared in electronic form only, with hard copy production left to administrative assistants in the offices of ministers, deputy ministers, and ADMs.