

**The
Department
as a central
agency**

Within the government there are a few departments and agencies which have traditionally been regarded as central agencies; these include the Privy Council Office, the Treasury Board Secretariat and the Department of Finance. Perhaps less appreciated is the fact that External Affairs falls into this category. It is part of my purpose to ensure that this is understood and that the Department acts accordingly.

The central agencies are regarded as sources of advice to the government on the broad range of its national policies and programs. Each central agency approaches its task from a unique perspective. It is expected to bring the work of individual departments into harmony with government-wide programs and policies. Each central agency has a responsibility to advise not only its own Minister but also, under his authority, the collectivity of Ministers. Central agencies not only co-ordinate and consult, they lead on key issues of national policy. Central agency activity is thus crucial to the process of interdepartmental policy development and fundamental to the coherence of government policies.

The Government considers the Department of External Affairs to be a central agency because it has a responsibility to provide other departments with coherent policy and priority guidance covering the full range of Canada's international relations. It is expected to ensure that the international dimensions of all Government programs are integrated, consistent with, and served by, the Government's policies and priorities at home and abroad. To do this effectively the Department must exercise both day-to-day and long-term influence over the balance and direction of other departments' international activities.

If domestic policies with foreign dimensions are improperly co-ordinated with external policies, or are inconsistent with Canada's international goals and objectives, we in the Department are obliged to intervene. We must understand, analyze and advise other departments of trends in the international environment which may affect the substance or timing of proposed initiatives. We must relate the expertise and sectoral policy objectives of other departments to our own expertise and the Government's foreign policy. Although we have certain program responsibilities, such as consular services or information programs, we are essentially a central foreign policy management agency.

Our primary objective should be to exercise creative leadership on issues and programs with important international dimensions. The Secretary of State for External Affairs and his ministerial colleagues, and indeed the Prime Minister, must receive sound and timely advice from the Department on the formulation and management of Government policies from both the national and international perspectives. The Department should contribute to the definition of Canada's national interests and goals; it should also establish and maintain a positive sense of direction towards them. We in the Department must work to achieve maximum coherence and good sense in the system as a whole based on our reading of Canada's aggregate national interest.

A major aspect of this leadership role revolves around the question of establishing