

5.4 Improved Training

An Evaluation of the Consular Training Course at External Affairs and International Trade Canada was effected by a private consultant in late 1987, with the report submitted in January 1988. The mission survey which was used as an element in this Evaluation posed several questions concerning training received by consular staff, both through the courses at Headquarters and on-the-job training at the posts.

Course training usually involved 5 days or less of instruction. The mission survey results suggest that this is inadequate. It was described as both too theoretical and concentrated. The minimum course duration suggested for formal training was 2 weeks, to be supported by a 2 to 3 week session of on-the-job training.

The development of a professional service ethic would improve the status of the Consular Program within both the Department and amongst those working in the program. The definition of a clear and precise service ethic would necessarily be built into any and all training undertaken by consular staff, and the bureaux's staff at headquarters.

Therefore in respect to the current training it is recommended:

That the formal training of consular officers be expanded to 2 weeks supported by a 3 week on-the-job training session.

5.5 Updated COMIS

COMIS (Consular Operations Management Information System) was a result of a recommendation from the 1981 Consular Services Audit. Based on the mission surveys this Evaluation determined several areas within COMIS that are subject to improvement, in particular the definition of a "case."

Several respondents said that the time consumed by different individuals within a single mission and certainly between missions, on the same case, varies greatly. Subsequently the data gathered does not reflect inherent difficulties in the local contexts. As well, the hours spent in each activity as reported in COMIS are only approximations "that are often far from the reality."