

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1988 External Affairs and International Trade Canada (EAITC) provided assistance in approximately 600 000 instances to Canadians living or travelling abroad. Consular services which is a basic responsibility of the Department constitutes the major point of contact with the Canadian public. In 1988 EAITC utilized some 200 person years, 50 of which Canadian based.

This Report outlines the findings in response to two major concerns. First, concern had been raised that the continuing resource constraints had resulted in a drop in the quality of services provided under the Consular Program. Second, questions were raised on how well the Program is positioned to meet the challenge of increased demands coming in the Nineties. The latter dominated the deliberations of the Departmental Evaluation Working Group established to assist in the Evaluation.

Investigations included a pilot survey of 16 representative missions and a limited interview survey of the travel industry to obtain their views on the quality of the services and emerging demands. Findings from these surveys were reviewed with the program officials concerned and the Evaluation Working Group.

Work on this Evaluation was coordinated with the Auditor General's review reported in his 1989 Report which was released this fall. Particular attention was paid to the Auditor General's findings in formulating the recommendations from this Evaluation. Also the status of the recommendations from the 1981 Departmental Evaluation were reviewed as a part of the investigations.

On the positive side the Evaluation concluded that EAITC has been able to maintain the quality of its Consular services and that the resource constraints have not had a measurable impact on them. On the negative side serious concerns were raised about the Department's ability to continue to deliver these services during the Nineties at a level of quality acceptable to the Canadian public and the government. The key findings and recommendations are summarized below.

THE QUALITY OF CONSULAR SERVICES

In 1988 some 2.8 million Canadians were either travelling and/or living abroad excluding the United States. As mentioned above, in that year EAITC provided services in approximately 600,000 instances to Canadians abroad.