

than a flight of the imagination, but it may also be fraught with danger and disappointment. Consular Services frequently assists Canadian women who experience problems in overseas relationships, ranging from cyber-dating scams to domestic abuse to child custody disputes.

Proceed with caution if you're going abroad to meet a suitor, especially if the relationship began in the ambiguous realm of cyberspace.

- Before leaving Canada, learn about the laws, customs, and values of your potential partner's country regarding relationships and marriage. How that country views women's rights, premarital sex, property, inheritance, divorce, alimony, and child support and custody may be totally different from what you're used to. Learn if the freedoms you enjoy in Canada exist in the culture you're marrying into. In

many countries, a husband has the right to impose travel restrictions on his wife and children, preventing their return to Canada. Failure to find out in advance could result in huge problems later on.

- Never quit your job, give up your home, or sell all your belongings in the hope of a union that may never happen or that you may later regret.
- If meeting your possible partner for the first time, be sure to do so in a public place, such as a restaurant or café. As an added precaution, leave a note in your room stating where and with whom the meeting will take place.
- Take time to get to know the man and his family. Don't be rushed into marriage. Make your decision only after returning to Canada.
- Don't divulge information about personal finances or how to access your bank accounts.