

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

5. *Lobbying and advocating on behalf of Canadian government positions.* Once advice has been delivered and national positions adopted, the function of political officers is to secure the acceptance of others. In the past, this meant dealing mainly with the executive branch of other governments. But in countries where the legislative branch wields significant independent powers (the US Congress, the Japanese diet), mission political officers perform lobbyist functions indistinguishable from those of government relations firms, law firms, and trade associations. In addition, it is becoming accepted practice in Western countries for foreign diplomats to seek to influence government policy by advancing national positions in public forums and forging alliances with local NGOs.
6. *Negotiating agreements and conventions.* A frequent goal of political work is agreement among countries on how to deal with a matter. At times, agreement takes the form of a joint communique issued by two governments after a bilateral meeting, or a political declaration or resolution adopted at the end of a multilateral meeting (North Atlantic Council, UN General Assembly etc.) At other times, agreement can take legal form. In both circumstances, political officers negotiate the terms. The process can be rapid when governments are developing a common position in response to a crisis, or complex and time-consuming when the task is codifying international rules of behaviour or establishing new international institutions.
7. *Managing foreign policy operations.* Headquarters and missions share responsibility for the effective execution of policy abroad, which can take a variety of forms such as high-level discussions with other governments, initiatives at multilateral conferences, cooperative ventures, and financial and administrative support for local programs.

Non-core functions are anything else that political officers do, and the list can be a long one. In some cases, there is substantive content to the work: research and documentation, public relations and communications, and the substantive dimensions of visits and conferences. But often, there is not: visits logistics, information management, resources management (human, financial, property, materiel), and mission administration.

The functions performed by any one political officer depend a good deal on the location of the work unit, its size and composition, its leadership, and the individual competencies of officers.