

## INTRODUCTION

### The Department of External Affairs

#### Historical Background

The Department of External Affairs was established approximately sixty years ago to deal with matters concerning Canada's relations with foreign governments.

It started off in a very modest way with a staff of an Under-Secretary and a handful of clerks. Canadian diplomatic interests abroad were handled by British diplomatic and consular authorities in the countries concerned, although a certain number of trade commissioners and immigration officials had been appointed by their respective departments to represent Canadian interests in these areas in selected countries.

The Department expanded its operations between 1926 and 1929 as legations were opened in Washington and Tokyo and the Commissioner-General in Paris was appointed Minister to France. This period of expansion was followed by ten years of consolidation up to the outbreak of the Second World War.

The need created by the war for closer and more direct contacts with Commonwealth and Allied governments led to a rapid increase of diplomatic exchanges with these and other foreign countries, principally in Europe and Latin America. Membership in the United Nations and other international organizations such as NATO, UNESCO, OECD, etc. also increased Canada's responsibilities outside its own borders and a number of permanent missions and delegations were established to represent Canada on these various bodies and their committees.