

Policy advice and determination

The two permanent responsibilities of the Department of External Affairs are to *recommend* external policy to the government, and to *implement* the policy decisions the government takes. The *determination* of policy under the parliamentary democratic system of government in Canada must be made by the minister (the Secretary of State for External Affairs) as the political head of the Department or by Cabinet, which constitutes the executive branch of government. The distinction between advising and implementing, on the one hand, and determining, on the other hand, is paramount under the Canadian system. A former Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs summed up the situation in these words: "It is for the civil servant *to inform and to advise*. It is for the political authority, the minister, the Cabinet, Parliament — *to decide*. This division of function is basic to the Canadian concept of government. Deviation from this principle will jeopardize the independence and efficiency of the Service. It will do more, it will threaten the foundation of responsible institutions."

Basis of foreign policy

The Department of External Affairs has the primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of Canada's interests abroad and the conduct of Canada's foreign relations. Fundamental national aims are reflected in and advanced by Canada's foreign policy in a complex, challenging and sometimes threatening world. The main purposes of national policy are:

- to foster economic growth;
- to safeguard sovereignty and independence;
- to work for peace and security;
- to promote social justice;
- to enhance the "quality of life";
- to ensure a harmonious natural environment.

The character of Canadian foreign policy is determined by the evolving pattern of emphasis given to these aims by the government in light of foreign and domestic constraints, including the resources available to the government.