

Context

THE ATIP OFFICE AT THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Just as the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade serves as a filter between domestic political considerations and international realities, so the ATIP office at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade serves as a funnel between the Department and requesters. But the Department extends from Ottawa to Missions around the globe, and the ATIP office has, therefore, a particular and sometimes difficult role to play

Array of subjects

Requests in 2001-2002 covered a great array of subjects: immediate political events, such as September 11, consular cases (Canadians in trouble overseas), NAFTA issues, financial questions, import and export problems, Canadian relations with various countries, passport information, personnel questions, ambassadorial appointments, human rights, flights of foreign aircraft over Canada, provincial relations with foreign countries, NORAD, KYOTO, the G-8, the e-mails of departmental managers, diplomatic immunity and others.

One example, among many, of an issue of particular interest to Canadians, was the death of an Ottawa citizen and the trial of the Russian diplomat involved. The sensitivities of the families, as well as those of foreign governments, required particularly careful consideration in reviewing close to 9,000 pages of documents.

Challenges within the Department

Officers and staff move frequently in this Department, from assignments at Headquarters to positions at Canadian missions abroad and back, and it is up to the ATIP office to ensure that continuity of information and awareness of the legal obligations imposed by the *Act* are preserved. Raising awareness of the two *Acts* among colleagues is an important objective. In an era of exponentially-increasing information-flow, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, like other departments, is revising its records management and information storage systems. In this context, the ATIP office is working hard to remind officers of the importance of good record and information management and encouraging colleagues to record and save all records related to their work.