

Canada. The Department is able to arrange for the service of legal documents abroad to convention countries and thus be of assistance to Canadian lawyers. The Department has also been successful in serving legal documents abroad in non-convention countries on the basis of reciprocity. Solicitors who wish assistance in serving legal documents abroad should contact the Legal Advisory Division of the Department.

Canada has extradition treaties and arrangements with some 41 countries. In addition, Canada has rendition arrangements with countries that recognize the Queen as Head of State. The Department, in conjunction with the Department of Justice, has responsibility for updating existing treaties. In January 1987 Canada and the United States signed a Protocol to the Canada-United States Extradition Treaty of December 3, 1971, which will come into force on ratification. Under the Protocol, the list of offences for which extradition may be requested is dropped and extradition may be requested for any act which is an offence under the laws of both countries where the punishment is imprisonment for more than one year. This will include parental "childnapping" and tax evasion. An Exchange of Letters was signed constituting an understanding on "bounty hunters" who take persons illegally from Canada to the United States. The letters provide that bounty hunters are subject to extradition. It is hoped in the coming year to conclude new extradition treaties with the Netherlands, France and Belgium.

The Department continued to be involved in the international aspects of a number of civil kidnapping or "childnapping" cases involving disputes between a mother and a father over custody of a child. The Department has attempted to obtain reports on the well-being of the children involved and, where possible, has helped arrange for their return to Canada. In part because of the acute personal distress caused by such disputes, there has been considerable public interest in the role of the federal and provincial governments. The Department, of course, has no authority to represent a parent whose child has been abducted before a foreign court or give advice on foreign law.

Canada is a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. It entered into force for Canada on December 1, 1983. It has been extended

to all provinces and territories. Its main purpose is to ensure judicial co-operation in achieving the prompt return of a child wrongfully removed from the custodial parent to the country from which he or she was abducted. To date the following countries have ratified the Convention: France, Portugal, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Australia and Spain. Hungary has acceded to the Convention.

Access to information and privacy

The Office of the Co-ordinator for Access to Information and Privacy responded to 207 Access to Information and 46 formal Privacy Requests submitted to the Department during the year under review. Most of the requests were submitted to headquarters in Ottawa, although provisions are in place to receive requests submitted at Canadian missions abroad.

While Access to Information requests fell in number during the year, the complexity and scope of many of those received imposed an increasing burden on the operational units required to retrieve records and to make preliminary recommendations regarding disclosure. Also, given the Department's mandate regarding international affairs and trade, other government departments were required to consult with the Co-ordinator's Office prior to disclosing information touching on these areas.

The number of formal requests under the Privacy Act also declined. However a large number of informal requests for records from the Department's personnel information holdings, sent initially to various units of the Department, were answered by the Co-ordinator's Office; it has the responsibility to ensure that any information disclosure is fully consistent with the requirements of the Privacy Act.

Briefing programs and written instructions led to an increased awareness of the Privacy Act throughout the Department and to an increase in the number of consultations with the Co-ordinator's Office on the various departmental obligations under the Act.

The Co-ordinator's Office also serves as the Department's point of contact for the Registration of Information Collection and Public Opinion Research. In addition, it is responsible for the screening of inactive Departmental files prior to their transfer to the National Archives.