

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

- Since 1993, the consular bureau has operated the Consular Management and Operations System, an IT infrastructure which meets the specific needs of the consular program. Accessed through SIGNET, COSMOS allows headquarters and missions to create, store, retrieve, and communicate all the information required to provide prompt consular service 24-hours a day anywhere in the world. COSMOS includes modules on case management, passport issuance, travel, contingency planning, registration of Canadians, database searches, and messaging worldwide. It facilitates the collection of case management data and stores extensive documentary material such as treaties, laws, regulations, manuals, policy guidance, form letters and telephone directories. Compared to the cost of other IT systems, COSMOS has performed with admirable economy and efficiency, requiring only four people to operate at a total annual cost of just \$7 million.

PROPOSAL: Executive Committee should review the department's strategic plan for information technology to ensure top priority is accorded "mission-critical activities", in particular foreign policy applications. The plan should be revised to draw on the experience of other foreign ministries, the Privy Council Office, and successful departmental programs notably COSMOS.

PROPOSAL: The department should establish an electronic document management system which provides officers with "one-stop shopping" access to a departmental website with subject pages containing both classified and unclassified information and links to other directories (²³).

PROPOSAL: As soon as possible, the department should enunciate disciplines for the numbering, tagging and distribution of official communications and rules for the use of e-mail.

ISSUES PARTICULAR TO THE POLITICAL OFFICER

The "globalist" foreign service officer

If globalization requires a new breed of "globalist" foreign service officers, it is unlikely that traditional personnel policies and systems will produce the desired results. If globalists must be well versed in several fields simultaneously in order to "make sense of the whole", assigning individuals to "sub-global" compartments (political/economic, trade, etc.) is unlikely to be helpful conceptually or administratively. If globalists must have a rare combination of professional skills and personal attributes to "work the global system" effectively, allowing globalist professionals to be employed in sub-professional occupations or in support of other professional groups is to squander a precious and irreplaceable resource. Developing and sustaining the new "breed" will require distinctive recruitment systems, career management and training, and remuneration.

²³ *We acknowledge with thanks David Lee's authorship of this proposal.*