

5. IMMEDIATE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

5.1 Identification of the Issues

The Evaluation Working Group in reviewing the findings emerging from the study stressed the need to include two issues which have immediate implications for the Consular Program. Their concerns focus on the departmental priority assigned to the Program, and the lack of career opportunities for officers involved in consular work. In their considered opinion these are core issues which must be addressed if the quality of consular services is to be maintained. Since these are very significant issues, they were included in the Evaluation.

In addition to these issues, other areas of concern include the training of consular officers and the monitoring of the delivery of the services.

5.2 The Importance of the Program

The Evaluation Working Group stressed that the protection of the rights and interests of Canadians abroad is a basic and continuing responsibility of EAITC. Further they noted that consular services is the major point of contact between EAITC and the Canadian public. In their professional view this activity has been overshadowed during the past decade by other concerns including national security, trade and technology and immigration. As the Department became more involved in these areas, the importance assigned to consular services has declined.

The culture of an organization, particularly the perceptions and values of its senior managers, is a central force in how it responds to its clients and the environment. In the opinion of most consular officers, EAITC is not in tune with the new realities which are driving the demands for consular services. These include increased travel, dual citizenship, more drugs and violence.

Consular work is often seen as too demanding, coupled with low job satisfaction and few career opportunities. In the mission survey respondents asked to rate the importance of the consular functions with other areas of mission work rated it as the last function, even after administration. This undoubtedly has a negative impact on the morale of both the staff performing consular duties as well as of the quality of the consular services delivered.