

IV Services to Canadians

Consular activity

The Bureau of Consular Services provides consular assistance of all kinds to Canadians living or travelling outside Canada. Because of the growth of Canada's role in world affairs and the increasing facility of international travel, more Canadians than ever are visiting different parts of the world. With this increase in the number of Canadians travelling abroad, the need has been growing for more sophisticated and complex consular assistance and services from the Bureau and from External Affairs posts.

In Ottawa, the Bureau of Consular Services consists of two divisions — Consular Operations and Consular Policy. The former is concerned with day-to-day consular cases abroad (distressed Canadians), long-range emergency planning, family-reunification, applications for non-immigrant visas, registration of Canadians abroad, and responses to enquiries from the public. The latter deals with consular reports and statistics, consular conventions and multilateral and bilateral agreements, consular training and evaluation programs, the monitoring of relevant legislative developments, liaison with the travel industry and advice on questions about consular activities. At diplomatic and consular posts, consular services range from routine services like the issuing of passports or assisting Canadian travellers who are ill, destitute or in legal trouble to full emergency-evacuation procedures.

In 1976, Canadian missions abroad dealt with some half million requests for consular assistance. About 490,000 of these requests were for information and advice about Canadian and foreign government regulations, help in obtaining visas and the issuing or replacement of passports.

Almost 3,200 Canadians who experienced emergency financial difficulties abroad were assisted by posts and the Department in obtaining funds from relatives and friends in Canada or elsewhere. Another 250 Canadians without means to return to Canada were repatriated on a cost-recovery basis. The deaths abroad of 460 Canadians were reported to

External Affairs posts, and next-of-kin were notified and given help in making burial arrangements.

The number of Canadians who became ill or were injured abroad was over 600. Besides helping these persons to get medical care, posts informed their families or friends of the circumstances and, when appropriate, provided details to provincial health-insurance departments to facilitate the settlement of medical accounts overseas.

During 1976, 1,018 Canadians were arrested or detained in foreign countries for a variety of offenses, one-third involving drugs. The Canadian missions helped the accused to obtain legal counsel, took steps to see that they were not denied due process of law in accordance with the laws of the country concerned and, in general, tried to guarantee humane treatment of the accused.

The UN *Habitat* conference in Vancouver and the Olympic Games in Montreal, Kingston and several other cities involved the Bureau in establishing procedures and regulations to facilitate the entry of visitors, in responding to a mounting number of enquiries from foreign embassies and the general public about visa matters, and in issuing non-immigrant visas to certain categories of visitor. About 12,000 such visa applications were processed during 1976.

The signing at Helsinki in August 1975 of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe had the effect in 1976 of focusing renewed attention on human contacts. The Department sought to promote the freer movement of people and, in particular, to reunite divided families in Canada. This involved an increasing number of representations, on humanitarian grounds, to governments of countries where emigration was controlled.

The Bureau is responsible for the development of contingency plans for the protection and evacuation of Canadians in disturbed parts of the world. During 1976, it reviewed resources and contingency measures and concentrated on the development of plans to cover local conflicts and natural disasters.