

Interdepartmental Committee on External Relations

The Interdepartmental Committee on External Relations (ICER) consists of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs (as chairman), the deputy ministers of the Departments of Industry, Trade and Commerce, Employment and Immigration, and National Defence, and the President of the Canadian International Development Agency, the Secretary to the Cabinet and the Secretary of the Treasury Board. This body was established in 1970 to advise the Government, through the Secretary of State for External Affairs, on such matters as the formulation of broad policy for foreign operations, the harmonization of departmental and agency "country plans", the allocation of resources for the conduct of programs abroad, program-implementation, the recommendation of head-of-post appointments and personnel policies for foreign operations. The ICER has a small secretariat staffed by personnel on loan from the departments and agencies responsible for major foreign-operations programs. It is assisted by several subcommittees, including an *ad hoc* subcommittee and an information subcommittee.

During 1977, ICER and its subsidiary bodies concentrated on developing measures to improve the effectiveness of Canada's foreign operations. In response to the Government's policy of manpower restraint, ICER continued to use its "country-programming system" to review the nature and extent of representation abroad and, where possible, to reduce and redeploy the number of personnel abroad. With a review to rationalizing Canadian representation abroad, ICER also undertook a study of the activities abroad of government departments and agencies with limited foreign operations.

The ICER *ad hoc* subcommittee continued to focus its attention on methods of streamlining the country-programming system. It also considered a number of other issues, such as criteria for the opening and closing of posts, official-hospitality guidelines and interdepartmentally-accepted descriptions of foreign operations programs. The information subcommittee, which is concerned with liaison between departments and agencies having information programs abroad, continued its efforts to improve co-ordination in this field.

Table I provides a summary of the location of the 124 Canadian posts in existence in 1977-78 and the 4,872 persons engaged in carrying out the Government's 13 foreign-operations programs in some 140 countries and 39 major international institutions. Table II indicates the relative number of man-years devoted to the major foreign-operations programs by program personnel. Table III breaks down the number of program staff abroad by department or agency, which differ considerably from the 13 accepted foreign-operations programs.