

"complete reliance on the individual judgement of consular staff in interpreting the manual heightens the risk of inconsistent treatment of Canadians."

The Auditor General's findings were based on on-site observations at selected posts.

The projected increases in the number of Canadians travelling and working abroad in the nineties will generate substantial increases in demand for consular services. Several of the missions surveyed during the Evaluation predict substantial increases over the next three years.

Interviews with the travel and insurance industry indicated that there are several areas where the Canadian public travelling abroad could obtain adequate protection and/or insurance in medical and crime related incidents. Depending upon the extent of industry's coverage and the level of development of the host country's medical and police services, the involvement of the private sector could help to reduce the demands for consular services at the missions. At the same time EAITC's consular responsibilities will continue in less-developed countries or in specific situations where private industry is unable to meet the needs of consular clients.

Action to limit consular services of a discretionary nature and to encourage greater private industry involvement would involve several elements. These include directives to the consular officers at each consular post, additional training on how to tactfully handle the changes, and efforts to educate the travelling public on the services available and not available within the Consular Program. Failure to handle significant changes in services in a responsible manner could have serious political repercussions.

More attention should be paid in focusing effort on higher priority activities. This will require more careful planning and greater operational control at the missions and more functional supervision from Headquarters. Therefore it is recommended:

That the missions be directed to focus on the services considered to be of higher priority and to limit discretionary services such as the provision of general information. That the implementation of this recommendation be monitored as a part of the mission planning exercise.