



The first step for many Canadians seeking information about a country in an emergency is DFAIT's consular website. "We are the face of the Government of Canada regarding travel advice," says Lucie Chantal, Director of the Consular Information and Public Outreach Division (CLS).

CLS publishes travel reports, travel advisories and emergency information pages with the latest developments. The website is also the portal to Registration of Canadians Abroad, a free service that enables Canadians to sign up and be contacted and assisted by government officials in case of an emergency abroad or informed about an emergency at home.

During an emergency abroad, the Trade Communications Bureau keeps Canadian businesses involved with the afflicted country abreast of the situation on the ground. When companies want to help out, the bureau can connect them with agencies such as the Canadian Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders.

"Keeping companies informed is part of our duty to protect Canada's commercial interests abroad," says André-Marc Lanteigne, Director General of Trade Communications. "Connecting companies with aid agencies, while not formally part of our mandate, is easy to do and a moral duty."

Emergencies often bring together many DFAIT divisions as well as key partner departments, each of which is represented on and can coordinate through an emergency task force. When communications bureaus in several departments need to speak, coordination is formalized through an interdepartmental group of directors general of communications that convenes daily or as needed to assess progress and provide direction in order to ensure the government's response is communicated in a clear and timely manner.

"These conference calls are incredibly useful in times of crisis, as they create an informed and coordinated response," says Brown. "They're a tangible demonstration of a whole-of-government approach."



1. Debora Brown
2. Jade Puddington
3. Martha McLean
4. Charles Brisebois
5. Marie-Jo Proulx
6. Colette Déry
7. Emmanuelle Lamoureux



While Ottawa Slept

By Colette Déry

I was hired by the Department of External Affairs in the early 1980s to work in the Watch Office. Actually, I was the Watch Office. Between the hours of 11 p.m. and 8 a.m., behind sealed doors on the second floor of Tower A, I prepared the overnight digest for then Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark.

Twice in the night, I would go down to the basement and collect the telegrams that had come in from our missions, combing through them to select any reports I thought warranted the minister's attention. I would then prepare a two- or three-sentence summary of each report.

Down the hall from my office were four news-wire machines—their steady "clack-clack" pretty well the only sound in the area (not counting the overnight *Hawaii Five-O* reruns on the TV in my office.) That sound changed to alarm bells if there was breaking news. Part of my job was to monitor the machines and select news items the minister should see before getting to his office.

At about 6 a.m., a secretary (as they were called back then) would arrive to type up my selections into a one-page digest. Once that was ready, I would race down and hand it to the minister's driver so Mr. Clark could read the digest while in the car.

Thirty years later, communications have changed a great deal, but the place still feels like home.

Colette Déry is the foreign affairs senior speech writer in the Foreign Policy and Corporate Communications Division (BCF).