

Context

THE ATIP OFFICE AT THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Stretching from Ottawa to Missions around the globe, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) holds a particular and sometimes difficult mandate, rendering the role of the ATIP office equally wide-ranging and complex.

Array of subjects

Requests in 2002-2003 covered a great array of subjects: immediate political events, consular cases (Canadians in trouble overseas), NAFTA, financial questions, import and export problems, trade issues of all sorts, Canadian relations with various countries, passport information, personnel questions, ministerial and ambassadorial expenses, diplomatic immunity, grants and contributions and many others.

One demanding and unusual example was that of 61 requests received from a single requester on a single day, for all records in the e-mail systems of a wide variety of employees within the Department, requiring an immediate and considerable effort on the part of the ATIP office, and one which is expected to continue for more than a year.

Challenges within the Department

Officers and staff move frequently in this Department, from assignments at Headquarters to positions at Canadian missions abroad and back, and it is up to the ATIP office to ensure that continuity of information and awareness of the legal obligations imposed by the *Act* are preserved. Raising awareness of the two *Acts* among colleagues is an important objective, and good working relationships with Offices of Primary Interest (OPIs) have allowed the ATIP office to implement a variety of training tools. In an era of exponentially-increasing information flow, DFAIT, like other departments, is revising its records management and information storage systems. In this context, the ATIP office is working hard to remind officers of the importance of good record and information management and encouraging colleagues to record and save all records related to their work.