

# Chapter 6

## PROTECTION OF PRIVATE INTERESTS

### Consular services

Canadians are travelling abroad in ever-increasing numbers and seem each year to venture off to farther and riskier regions of the world. Thus it is not surprising that an increasing number encounter difficulties and turn for help to the 119 Canadian missions located around the world.

The Department, through its Consular Program, provides protection and assistance to Canadians in distress. In 1985, Canadian missions abroad extended more than 570 000 services to Canadian citizens. These services included: issuing passports; performing certain citizenship services; assisting in the transfer of funds or the return to Canada of destitute or incapacitated Canadians; ensuring that detained or imprisoned Canadians are treated fairly under the laws of the host countries; facilitating detainees' communication with families and friends in Canada, and in some cases assisting in their transfer to Canadian prisons in accordance with treaties with the United States, Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, France, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom; providing advice, information or taking a supporting role to assist Canadians in situations involving problems such as illness, death, child custody, and lost or stolen property.

Major crises of 1985 like the Air India disaster, the Mexican earthquake, and the eruption of the Nevada el Ruiz volcano in Colombia placed severe demands on consular services overseas and at headquarters. Such events, involving serious physical danger and emotional distress to large numbers of Canadians require rapid, efficient and flexible responses. The Department has developed effective crisis management procedures for assisting Canadians in such circumstances. In order to improve its ability to handle crises, the Department has thoroughly revised its contingency planning system; registration procedures for Canadians abroad have been streamlined and the information computerized.

In face of the increased demands on the consular services, consular training has continued to be given a high priority. Through presentations, case studies, discussion and simulations, departmental personnel were familiarized with consular policy and its application. In all, 176 employees in Canada and abroad took consular training courses in 1985.

Another service provided by the Department is a public awareness program, the purpose of which is to inform Canadians of the potential problems of travelling abroad and of the consular services available at Canadian missions. The information is disseminated in a booklet entitled *Bon Voyage, but...*, and through radio talk shows as well as through interviews with journalists. About 1 000 000 copies of the booklet are distributed each year to travelling Canadians at passport offices and travel agencies. It is revised annually to reflect altered circumstances. The Department also provides, on request, information about the advisability of travelling to

specific locations, and with increasing frequency, has been issuing travel warnings.

In some areas where Canada has no regular diplomatic or consular representation, honorary consuls provide front-line consular services to Canadians travelling or living abroad. They also frequently assist other departmental programs such as trade development, public affairs and general relations. During the past year an honorary consul was appointed to Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

### Passport services

The year just past represented a milestone for Canadian passports. Canada became the first country in the world to issue all travel documents domestically in the new machine-readable format according to standards published by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Conversion to the new passport was accomplished, with more than one million travel documents provided to Canadians — an all-time high. A new passport issuing system, designed by the Passport Bureau and involving procurement of new, efficient and highly reliable equipment, was largely responsible for this achievement while maintaining a secure travel document and excellent service at reasonable cost. The new passports were issued to applicants beginning in April 1985. With the ever-increasing number of passports issued since 1981-82, one in every six Canadians is now in possession of a passport.

Canadian diplomatic and consular missions abroad issued approximately 59 300 passports in 1985-86. The new passport will be issued by these missions in 1986-87.

### Immigration and refugees

The Department is responsible for the implementation of Canada's immigration program abroad. The number of immigrant visas issued by Canadian missions abroad in 1985 totalled 72 810, slightly under the 1984 total. More than two-thirds of the visas were issued to immigrants in the family, refugee and humanitarian categories. The number of visitor visas issued at Canadian missions during the same period totalled more than 271 000.

New immigration regulations effective January 1, 1986, set new selection criteria for independent immigrants wishing to settle in Canada. It is expected that the new regulations will allow more immigrants with the skills necessary to contribute to the Canadian economy to enter the country. The new regulations had the immediate effect of increasing considerably the number of immigration applications submitted to our missions at the beginning of 1986. At the same time, the missions continued to encourage the immigration of independent business people. In 1985 close to 1 700 business immigrants brought an estimated \$1 016 951 000 of capital into Canada, which represents a job creation potential of some 9 250 jobs.