

Chapter 6

PROTECTION OF PRIVATE INTERESTS

Consular services

Close to 40 million Canadians travel abroad each year, the great majority of whom go to the United States. In 1983, nearly 1.7 million went to countries other than the United States, a marginal increase over the total of the previous year. Sometimes they encounter difficulties and turn for help to one of the 124 Canadian missions located around the world. Canadians abroad are encouraged, in the first instance, to resolve their own problems but, if they are unable to do so, the Department through its consular program tries to be of assistance. Services extended to Canadian citizens abroad include: issuing passports; performing certain citizenship services; assisting in the transfer of funds or return to Canada of destitute or incapacitated Canadians; ensuring that detained or imprisoned Canadians are treated fairly under the laws of host countries; facilitating their communication with families and friends in Canada, and in some cases assisting in their transfer to Canadian prisons under the terms of transfer of offenders treaties that Canada has negotiated with a number of countries; providing advice, information or taking a supporting role to assist Canadians in situations involving illness, death, child custody, lost or stolen property and other matters compatible with Section 5 of the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. In cases of major national disasters, civil disorders and war, the Department may arrange for evacuation of Canadians from the area concerned.

The demand for consular services has been increasing in recent years, due largely to the growing number of Canadians travelling, working and residing permanently abroad. To meet their needs, the Department has been pursuing a number of initiatives.

The *Manual of Consular Instructions*, introduced in the last fiscal year, has been under review to ensure that it reflects adjustments in consular policies and serves adequately the changing needs, priorities, laws and regulations affecting consular services.

At least 800 Canadians were detained or sentenced in foreign prisons during the year. Twenty-eight Canadians were repatriated from prisons in the United States, Mexico, and Peru under the Transfer of Offenders agreements, which enable Canadians imprisoned abroad to complete their sentences in Canada, close to family and friends and under conditions which improve their prospects for rehabilitation and integration into Canadian society. Canada continued to negotiate such agreements with additional countries. Two consular divisions in the Department provided the necessary policy and operational support to posts abroad and kept in touch with families and friends of detainees and of other distressed Canadians. They also carried on a public awareness program to inform Canadians of the potential problems of travelling abroad and of the Department's services to travelling

Canadians.

During the year, the Department reviewed plans for assisting Canadians caught in emergency situations in regions of civil or political instability. The revised plans take account of changing conditions and other factors which might affect the Department's capability to react effectively in an emergency.

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. In some places, they also assist other departmental programs such as trade development, public affairs and general relations. During the past year honorary consuls were appointed in Acapulco (Mexico), Auckland (New Zealand), Bujumbura (Republic of Burundi), Karachi (Pakistan) and Belize City (Belize), bringing to 24 the number of consulates that are headed by honorary consuls.

Canada continued the negotiation of bilateral consular conventions with other countries, primarily those where Canadians have encountered difficulties or where the Department believed that an agreement would facilitate its task of protecting and assisting Canadians. Following consultations with the provinces, negotiations were resumed with the USSR and Hungary in 1983, and preparations were made to resume them with other East European countries.

Passport services

Some 3.5 million Canadians hold valid passports. The average number of passports issued, which rose during the previous five-year period at an approximate rate of 5 per cent per annum, increased by 19 per cent in 1983-84. Although there is no single factor creating this demand, the increase may be attributable partly to favourable exchange rates (except with the US) and reasonable travel fares.

The Passport Office issued a total of 830 000 Canadian passports, Certificates of Identity and UN Refugee Convention travel documents during the 1983-84 fiscal year. Of these, 774 000 were issued in Canada and 56 000 at diplomatic and consular posts abroad. These figures compare with 652 000 and 51 000 in 1982-83.

A total of 3 311 Certificates of Identity and 355 refugee travel documents were issued in 1983-84, a decrease of 21 per cent compared to 1982-83 figures. This reflected the tendency of the large number of refugees who arrived in the late 1970s from Asia to acquire Canadian citizenship as soon as possible.

The regional passport offices across Canada provided over-the-counter services to 75 per cent of passport applicants in Canada. The trend to submit applications at regional offices is a result of growing public awareness of the fast local services they provide. A toll-free telephone inquiry service is in