

*The Political Officer
in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade*

PROPOSAL: Each career plan should incorporate a career development program providing for assignments in a variety of fields and secondments to other government departments.

Enhancing professionalism

- CIDA, DND, RCMP, CSIS, and other departments with representatives abroad typically arrange for an overlap at post between the incumbent and the successor to ensure the reliable handover of files and facilitate a "fast start" on the part of the new arrival. In many cases, officers also make orientation visits to the mission in advance of taking up their new assignment.
- The Trade and Economic Policy branch, the International Business Development branch, and the Consular Bureau have all maintained the practice of having their staff abroad meet regularly at regional conferences or travel to Canada for discussions with headquarters staff and with important contacts in and out of government. The Human Rights Division (AGH) allocates resources in the divisional budget for regular visits to Ottawa of its officers in New York and Geneva.
- The Foreign Office operates Wilton Park to assist in maintaining high standards of intellectual inquiry and policy analysis, bringing together foreign policy practitioners, academics and other specialists from the UK and throughout the world for conferences, seminars and research on international developments and trends.
- In France, every two months Politique étrangère de la France publishes a compendium of press releases, speech texts, press interviews, parliamentary replies and other documents related to French foreign policy. Materials are organized chronologically, with a subject index and a country index. In addition, Notes et études documentaires provides relatively brief high quality analyses of current events authored by experts of all nationalities.

PROPOSAL: The department should institute the practice of having officers going on posting prepare for their assignment through a familiarization visit or a period of overlap with the incumbent. Such practice should be the rule not the exception, and budgets should protect funds for this purpose.

PROPOSAL: Mission political officers should be meeting at regional conferences or traveling to Ottawa every year for discussions with headquarters contacts and other stakeholders.

PROPOSAL: The department should launch a feasibility study for the creation of a Canadian Wilton Park. Options could include joint ventures with other government departments and/or with private sector interests.