

require urgent assistance and possibly evacuation from the area. In such cases, Canadian representatives give all possible assistance; notifying next-of-kin, arranging for medical attention, providing emergency financial assistance, emergency evacuation, and so on. The vast majority of these situations have happy endings, and I receive many letters testifying to this. During the past year, our embassies and consulates abroad provided over 200,000 consular services to Canadians in difficulties or seeking assistance for one reason or another.

Services are also rendered in happier circumstances: the registration of a birth of a Canadian abroad; helping a foreign bride of a Canadian to come to Canada; making available Canadian papers and news bulletins about events at home.

Perhaps, before concluding this part of my remarks, I might say a few words about passports. These are essentially internationally-recognized identity documents, which are accepted by foreign governments as proof that their bearers are Canadian citizens.

The passport contains the formal request to all concerned to "allow the bearer to pass freely, without let or hindrance, and to afford the bearer such assistance and protection as may be necessary".

There is sometimes some misapprehension that passports are somehow more than this. They are not, for instance, permits to enter foreign countries. They do not afford any special protection or immunity from foreign laws and regulations. Nor are they certificates of good conduct.

If a Canadian passport is usually highly regarded by foreign immigration and travel authorities, it is because Canada and Canadians, on the whole, enjoy a good reputation abroad, through the policies and attitudes we have adopted in our external dealings and through the understanding of Canadians generally of the obligations of a visitor in a foreign country. Parenthetically, I might add that the high reputation of Canadians is one reason why extraordinary efforts have sometimes been made to forge our passports. Because a Canadian passport is so keenly sought after it should be carefully protected and highly valued.

Asylum The complex question of asylum has come to public attention in recent months with the 55 Chileans and others who sought shelter in the Canadian Embassy in Santiago last autumn.