

Passing the Baton

When it comes to their place in the professional life cycle, DFAIT employees show as much diversity as in anything else. *Our World* talked to a number of employees at both ends of the generational spectrum—some newly hired and looking ahead to an exciting career, and some seasoned veterans who offer fascinating insights on their many years of service with the department.

When Jim Puddington retired in mid-January, he was as enthusiastic as ever about the department he had worked in for nearly 47 years.

“I could hardly have found a place that would have offered me such satisfaction over so many years—colleagues, contacts and friends I encountered around the world, involvement in summits and encounters with world leaders I would otherwise never have had.”

Jim’s career took him to postings in India, Austria, Barbados and twice to Turkey. He also worked on the Indochina International Control Commission and on geographic and multilateral desks, including the United Nations, with 15 years focused on relations with Turkey.

No matter what he was doing, whether abroad or in Canada, Jim always focused on building a network of contacts with Canadians and foreign officials and within civil society. “Every diplomat should do this,” he says. “The better your extended family of contacts, the greater chance of reaching someone who can help in a crisis. If the person knows you, you have an entrée.”



Jade Puddington credits her father Jim for instilling in her a curiosity about global affairs.

As Jim leaves the department, his daughter Jade is nearing the end of her first year as a foreign service officer. She began work last March as a policy adviser in the International Crime and Terrorism Division. Two months ago, she moved to the Emergency Management Bureau dealing with crises.

For Jade, whose early years of following her father along from posting to posting instilled in her a curiosity about global affairs, DFAIT was the only game in town that could offer the kind of life she wanted.

“I was accustomed to living in and experiencing a wide range of countries and cultures, and I want that to continue. I developed the flexibility and adaptability I’ll need—and I’m just going to roll with it, like my dad did.”

Robert Vanderloo, who was Canada’s ambassador to Portugal from 1998 to 2002, spent more than three decades in the department as a trade commissioner, an ambition he mentioned during his initial interview back in 1974. “Seeing the world had been my childhood dream, and by joining DFAIT, I realized it.”

Since then, he has served in missions in South America, Europe and Asia, and helped organize the Team Canada visit of former prime minister Jean Chrétien and the provincial premiers to Southeast Asia. He has also served as a special adviser for the G-8 and G-20 summits since his formal retirement in 2007.

For Robert, the greatest change in the department that he’s noticed as a trade commissioner is the paring back of duties to what is strictly essential. “Superfluous things went by the wayside, and you can’t argue with the wisdom of that,” he says.

His daughter Caroline Vanderloo, who has been at DFAIT for a year, is working as a policy analyst in Circumpolar and Aboriginal Affairs. She envisions a life of travel much like her father enjoyed during his time in the department. “Because of my childhood experience, the idea of staying in one place for more than three years seems odd to me. I’m glad to have a job that will allow me to regularly encounter new environments and new people, and perhaps learn a few new languages along the way.”

Dave Edwards, a seasoned foreign service officer who is nearing his 30th anniversary at DFAIT, plans to retire this fall. “Somewhat to my surprise, I turned out to be a ‘lifer,’ and I have to say those 30 years, fine as they’ve been, have passed with terrifying speed,” he says. In his career, he’s been posted