

IV Services to Canadians

Consular Activity

The primary object of the consular program is to afford consular protection and assistance to Canadian nationals travelling or residing outside Canada. Every year, Canadians venture into remoter parts of the world. They also undertake more and more complex activities abroad — establishing residence, setting up businesses, retiring, studying, consulting and exploring. This growing and diversified connection with the world outside Canada, coupled with an increasing awareness of the consular services and assistance Canadian posts can provide, has meant greater and more complex demands on consular resources both at home and abroad.

The Bureau of Consular Services has attempted during the past year to define and refine methods of providing better consular operations. The following programs indicate the scope and direction of the activities undertaken by the Bureau during 1975:

- a) improved training programs for consular personnel at home and abroad, as well as continuing assessment to ensure that adequate personnel and financial resources are available at posts to help distressed Canadians;
- b) appointment of honorary consuls in territories where there is a need for consular services that cannot be met by the present resources of the posts responsible, or by arrangement with other Commonwealth consular services;
- c) development and improvement of guidelines and procedures for meeting emergencies affecting Canadians in all parts of the world;
- d) development of a framework for bilateral consular agreements and improvement of the international consular environment affecting Canadian interests abroad;
- e) development and implementation of a Consular Awareness Program to increase the amount of information available to acquaint Canadians with problems they may experience abroad;
- f) continuing review of legislative developments and practice in Canada that may affect consular activities abroad;
- g) improvement of methods of collecting and analyzing statistical information and increased use of such material for "consular awareness", training and planning purposes.

The Bureau of Consular Services consists of two divisions, Consular Operations and Consular Policy. Both are involved, either separately or jointly, in implementing the programs listed above.

Consular Operations Division

In order to meet growing demand, the Consular Operations Division concentrated in 1975 on developing the quality of the service it offered, as well as in reducing to a minimum delays in responding to the needs of travellers.

During the year, the division and Canadian missions abroad handled close to half a million requests for consular assistance from travelling Canadians. They investigated the detention of 1,922 Canadians and assisted them in obtaining legal counsel and in insuring that they were treated with humanity. Over 2,948 stranded Canadians received help in obtaining financial assistance from relatives and friends in Canada. Over 625 Canadians who became ill or were involved in accidents abroad were assisted in obtaining suitable medical care. Notifications of the deaths abroad of 344 Canadians were received and transmitted to next-of-kin and, when necessary, funeral arrangements were made abroad. Some 440,000 people were assisted with visas, advice, information, replacement of lost passports, etc.

During 1975 an Honorary Consul was appointed in Malaga, Spain, to serve the needs of the large Canadian community there. A reduction in minor consular problems was attributable to the success of the Consular Awareness Program (discussed more fully below).

In addition to providing advice and assistance to Canadians in foreign countries and Canadians going abroad, the Consular Operations Division, in co-operation with the Department of Manpower and Immigration, was involved in various ways with the entry of aliens into Canada, including the issuance of non-immigrant visas to certain categories of visitor. Over 10,000 visa applications were processed during 1975 in the division, which responded to a large number of enquiries from foreign embassies and the general public on visa matters. With the co-operation of Canadian embassies abroad, the division was engaged in helping Canadians to bring their relatives from abroad to Canada. To this end, representations were made on humanitarian grounds to governments of countries where emigration was controlled.