

IMMEDIATE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

The protection of the rights and interests of Canadians abroad is a basic and continuing responsibility of EAITC. As well, consular services is the major point of contact for the Department with the Canadian public abroad. Unfortunately the consular program has been overshadowed during the past decade by other departmental concerns including national security, trade and technology and immigration. As the Department became more involved in these areas, the importance assigned to consular services declined.

The culture of an organization in terms of its perceptions and values is a central force in how it responds to its clients and the environment. There is a now deep concern that EAITC's senior managers are not in tune with the new realities which are driving the demands for consular services. These include increased tourist and business travel, additional demands due to dual citizenship, as well as increases in drug related incidents and violence.

The success of the Consular Program lies in being prepared to respond to personal crises, and disasters, either political or natural. Failure to adequately prepare for such events puts the Department at risk to criticism and reduces the security of Canadians abroad. Considering these factors it is recommended:

- . That the Department reaffirm the importance of the Consular Program by including a compulsory training program for all foreign service officers at the time of hiring to be followed by a first tour of duty abroad with consular responsibilities.

In addition to the question of program priority, there is another major concern which will have a major bearing on the quality of consular services in the future. This is the lack of an appropriate classification system for consular officers and its implications for career aspirations and paths. Consular experience is not recognized as an important factor for promotion boards. The result is that foreign service officers dedicated to consular work are not promoted whereas foreign service officers dedicated to only political, economic or trade for example, are promoted. The Evaluation Working Group stressed that this practice is recognized across the Department and has a very negative impact on officers assigned to the Consular Program. Further they stressed that action to correct this practice is fundamental to improving the Consular Program. Considering these factors it is recommended: