

Chapter 6

PROTECTION OF PRIVATE INTERESTS

Consular services

Canadians make close to 40 million trips abroad each year, the great majority of them to the United States. In 1984, there were nearly 1.7 million departures to countries other than the United States. Occasionally, Canadian travellers encounter difficulties and turn for help to one of the 127 Canadian missions located around the world. Canadians abroad are encouraged, in the first instance, to resolve their problems but, if they are unable to do so, the Department assists wherever possible through its consular program. In 1984, Canadian missions abroad extended over 450 000 individual services to Canadian citizens, including issuing passports; performing certain citizenship services; assisting in the transfer of funds or the return to Canada of destitute or incapacitated Canadians; ensuring that detained or imprisoned Canadians are treated fairly under the laws of host countries; facilitating detainees' communication with families and friends in Canada and, in some cases, assisting in their transfer to Canadian prisons; and providing advice, information or taking a supporting role in assisting Canadians in situations involving such problems as illness, death, child custody and lost or stolen property. Contingency plans were maintained to deal with major natural disasters, civil disorders and war.

The demand for consular services has increased steadily in recent years, primarily because more Canadians have been travelling, working and residing permanently abroad. In 1984, the Department pursued a number of initiatives to meet their needs better. A new, computerized system of statistical reports on consular services was introduced at posts abroad to contribute to more effective management of the consular program. The *Manual of Consular Instructions* continued to be reviewed to ensure that it reflects adjustments in consular policies and adequately serves the changing needs, priorities, laws and regulations affecting consular services. New staff-training initiatives were begun to attune departmental personnel, both in Canada and abroad, to the latest developments in consular policy and to equip them fully to carry out their consular functions.

At least 900 Canadians were detained or sentenced in foreign prisons during 1984. Twenty-four Canadians were repatriated from prisons in the United States, Mexico and Peru under the Transfer of Offenders agreements, which enable Canadians imprisoned abroad to complete their sentences in Canada, close to family and friends. In 1984, a transfer treaty was ratified with France, and Canada continued to negotiate such agreements with other countries.

The Department continued its public awareness program to inform Canadians of the potential problems of travelling abroad and of the consular services available at Canadian missions.

During the year, the Department reviewed plans for

assisting Canadians caught in emergency situations in regions of civil or political instability. The revised plans take account of changing conditions and other factors which might affect the Department's ability to react effectively in an emergency. For extreme situations, the plans provide for evacuation of Canadians from areas of danger.

In some areas where Canada has no regular diplomatic or consular representation, honorary consuls provide front-line consular services to Canadians travelling or living abroad. They also assist in other departmental programs such as trade development, public affairs and general relations. During the year, honorary consuls were selected for Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), Seville (Spain), Guayaquil (Ecuador) and Istanbul (Turkey).

The Department continued to consult interested parties in Canada on issues involved in the negotiation of bilateral consular conventions with other countries, particularly those in which Canadians have encountered difficulties or with which the Department believes an agreement would facilitate its task of protecting and assisting Canadians.

Passport services

In 1984-85, a record 947 000 Canadian passports, Certificates of Identity and UN Refugee Convention travel documents were issued in Canada and abroad. This represents an 11 per cent increase over 1983-84 and a 48 per cent increase in passport volume since 1980-81. Favourable exchange rates and reasonable travel fares continued to be major factors encouraging travel abroad.

Regional passport offices across Canada provided over-the-counter services to 76 per cent of passport applicants in Canada, a continuing indication of public awareness of the fast local services offered. In addition, the Passport Office handled over 973 000 telephone calls, of which 107 000 were on the toll-free line introduced the previous year.

Canadian diplomatic and consular posts abroad also experienced a significant increase in passport applications, issuing approximately 59 200 passports in 1984-85, 5.7 per cent more than in 1983-84.

During 1984-85, the Passport Office designed a new automated passport-writing system based upon international specifications to introduce a machine-readable passport for Canadians. With the aid of the latest technology, the new passports will be issued early in the new fiscal year and will incorporate additional features for security and durability.

Immigration and refugees

The Department is responsible for the implementation of Canada's immigration program abroad. There was a decline in immigration to Canada in 1984 primarily because of continued restrictions on immigrants destined for the Canadian labour force. Immigrant visas issued abroad in 1984