

1.5 Observations About the Committee's Comprehensive Review Process

The members of the Committee undertook this task with a commitment to effecting as thorough a review as possible. The complexity of the issues to be considered and their sensitivity made it clear early on in the process that the challenge it faced would be a daunting one, not to be easily completed in the time available.

This challenge was made even more difficult by the reluctance of some elements of the security and intelligence community to provide the Committee with the type of assistance it required to complete its task. This reluctance was manifested in an unwillingness to give the Committee full access to documents, to allow staff to accompany the Committee to all briefings, and to permit staff to visit all premises toured by the Committee. In fairness, however, it must be admitted that this review of security and intelligence in a public forum is a rarity for Canada, and a certain degree of reticence was to be expected. It must also be admitted that a fair degree of information was provided to the Committee and that it aided the review process. The Committee sensed the development of some degree of mutual understanding and trust between it and the security and intelligence community as it proceeded through its review.

The Committee has compared its experience of reticence and reluctance among the security and intelligence community in Canada with what it learned about the U.S. experience. Almost without exception, all those with whom the Committee came into contact in Washington, in both the Executive Branch and the intelligence agencies, were comfortable with Congressional review and oversight. It took time, however, for reticence to be overcome and for mutual trust to develop. As a result of progress in these matters, the U.S. Congressional oversight system appears to work better now than it did in the past. The Committee hopes that similar developments will occur in this country. Several of the Committee's recommendations will advance this goal.

The Committee's review was conducted at a time of change and flux in the Canadian security and intelligence community and in the international political realm. Unlike earlier reviews in Canada, this Committee's work was not animated by scandal or extraordinary events. The time was propitious for calm reflection in a period of flux but not of crisis. The recommendations in this Report are intended to take Canada's security intelligence community into the 1990s and beyond.

1.6 What the Committee Learned from the Review Process

The Committee sees its review as part of a two-directional continuum where the participants start out at opposite ends. The first part is the development by parliamentarians of their experience and expertise in the consideration of security and intelligence matters. The other part of the continuum is the acceptance by the security and intelligence community of the necessity and utility of parliamentary review. At the