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## NEWS RELEASE

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### MINISTERS LAUNCH CONSULAR AWARENESS PROGRAM

Secretary of State for External Affairs Barbara McDougall and Minister for External Relations and International Development Monique Landry today launched, in Vancouver, the Consular Awareness Program entitled "Bon Voyage, but . . .," an initiative of External Affairs and International Trade Canada. The launch is the starting point for a series of visits by department officials to various provincial capitals concluding in Halifax on May 17.

"The Canadian consular service has a proud tradition of assisting Canadians abroad," Mrs. McDougall said. "The significance of consular services, as witnessed by the recent work of officials in Baghdad and Kuwait, is important in helping Canadians avoid difficulties when travelling and living abroad."

"Currently, there are some 450 Canadians in prison abroad; some are waiting years for trial, others are subject to terrible conditions. Canadians must recognize that when abroad they are more vulnerable to serious punishment and that there is often little recourse after conviction," Mme Landry said. "The 'Bon Voyage, but...' program offers Canadians practical advice on preparing for safe travel

outside Canada, and outlines realistic expectations of our consular services and an appreciation of their own responsibilities while travelling abroad."

The department is working with private sector representatives directly associated with the travel industry. To date, the Medical Services Association of British Columbia, Canadian Airlines International, Alberta and Ontario Blue Cross, NationAir, and American Express Canada are involved in efforts to reach the wide and varied audience of Canadian travellers.

Last year Canada's missions extended over 600,000 separate services to Canadian citizens ranging from routine enquiries to appeals for help. The Consular Awareness Program focuses on informing Canadians about the numerous services offered by Canada's missions, providing them with a better understanding of a mission's abilities and functions, and describing their responsibilities in ensuring safe and pleasurable travel.

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