



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

REPORT 7, CONSULAR SERVICES TO CANADIANS ABROAD—GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA, OF THE 2018 SPRING REPORTS OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

The Honourable Kevin Sorenson, Chair

**OCTOBER 2018
42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Standing Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website
at the following address: www.ourcommons.ca

**REPORT 7, CONSULAR SERVICES TO
CANADIANS ABROAD—GLOBAL AFFAIRS
CANADA, OF THE 2018 SPRING REPORTS OF
THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA**

**Report of the Standing Committee on
Public Accounts**

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson
Chair**

OCTOBER 2018

42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committee presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

CHAIR

Hon. Kevin Sorenson

VICE-CHAIRS

Alexandra Mendès
David Christopherson

MEMBERS

Chandra Arya	Joyce Murray*
Shaun Chen	Alexander Nuttall
Pat Kelly	Randeep Sarai
Steven Mackinnon*	Jean Yip
Rémi Massé	

OTHER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WHO PARTICIPATED

Gérard Deltell	Stephanie Kusie
Pam Goldsmith-Jones	Paul Lefebvre
Robert Kitchen	

* Non-voting member, pursuant to Standing Order 104(5).

CLERK OF THE COMMITTEE

Angela Crandall

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Parliamentary Information and Research Service

André Léonard, Analyst

Dillan Theckedath, Analyst

THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

has the honour to present its

FIFTIETH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(3)(g), the Committee has studied the Report 7, Consular Services to Canadians Abroad—Global Affairs Canada, of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, and has agreed to report the following:



REPORT 7, CONSULAR SERVICES TO CANADIANS ABROAD – GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA, OF THE 2018 SPRING REPORTS OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

INTRODUCTION

According to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG), consular services “refer to a range of services and assistance available to Canadians living or travelling abroad. The 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations allows Global Affairs Canada [GAC or the Department] staff to help Canadian citizens in difficulty or distress in other countries. Staff can provide up-to-date travel information and advice, process and issue travel documents (such as passports), and coordinate responses in crisis situations, such as terrorist attacks or natural disasters.”¹

In 2016–2017, these services cost \$156 million, and were delivered by about 470 Departmental staff in 150 countries, through over 260 offices.²

According to the OAG, in 2015, “Canadians made almost 55 million trips abroad – an increase of 21% from 10 years ago. This caused growing demand for consular assistance, such as in arrest and detention cases, medical emergencies, or determining the well-being or whereabouts of Canadians abroad. Many consular cases may be considered routine and largely administrative, but others can become complex and time-consuming.”³

Additionally, it should be noted that the “level of consular assistance that Canada provides at its missions abroad is discretionary—that is, it is not mandated by legislation. As well, the Canadian government has no jurisdiction over, and little influence on, how foreign countries enforce their laws and carry out judicial processes and government operations. When Canadians travel or live abroad, they are ultimately responsible for

1 Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG), [Report 7—Consular Services to Canadians Abroad—Global Affairs Canada](#), of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 7.1.

2 Ibid., para. 7.2.

3 Ibid., para. 7.3.



informing themselves about the risks and the cultural and legal environments of their destinations.”⁴

In the spring of 2018, the OAG released a performance audit whose purpose was to determine “whether Global Affairs Canada responded adequately to requests for consular assistance from Canadians travelling or living abroad.”⁵

On 5 June 2018, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts held a hearing on this audit. In attendance from the OAG were Michael Ferguson, Auditor General of Canada, and Carol McCalla, Principal. From GAC were Ian Shugart, Deputy Minister, and Heather Jeffrey, Assistant Deputy Minister, Consular, Emergency Management, and Security.⁶

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Responding to Canadians Abroad in Emergency or Crisis Situations

The OAG found that GAC “increased its capacity as needed to meet demand and deliver consular services to Canadians during crises;” however, “it did not always capture lessons learned or track the implementation of the recommendations they contained.”⁷

For example, “the Department successfully increased its capacity to help Canadians when hurricanes Irma and Maria damaged 16 countries and territories in September 2017.”⁸ However, “media articles reported that some Canadians in affected areas expected the government to charter flights for their return. Global Affairs Canada has recognized the need to better inform Canadians about the nature and extent of the consular services available to them during emergencies.”⁹

Additionally, according to the OAG, “Global Affairs Canada policy requires lessons-learned exercises to be completed following its response to significant events abroad.”¹⁰

4 Ibid., para. 7.4.

5 Ibid., para. 7.5.

6 House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, [Meeting No. 102](#).

7 OAG, [Report 7—Consular Services to Canadians Abroad—Global Affairs Canada](#), of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 7.13.

8 Ibid., para. 7.19.

9 Ibid., para. 7.21.

10 Ibid., para. 7.22.

The OAG found “completed lessons-learned reports for 12 out of 13 events occurring during [the] audit period. Lessons-learned reports focused on how the emergency was managed, including communication” but they “did not consistently assess the ground-level response at the mission.”¹¹ The OAG also noted that “the Department did not track the implementation of all of the recommendations in its lessons-learned reports.”¹²

Consequently, the OAG recommended that “Global Affairs Canada should complete lessons-learned reports and action plans after each crisis and track the implementation of the resulting recommendations. As well, it should further develop a communications and outreach strategy, including an analysis of specific types of travellers, to inform Canadians about international travel risks and what consular services are available in times of crisis.”¹³

The Department agreed to this recommendation and stated in its Detailed Action Plan that it will “further standardize the elements of lessons learned reports across all types of emergencies” and “continue to track the implementation of the resulting recommendations.”¹⁴ Furthermore, GAC stated that going forward, its “external communications process during emergencies will be reviewed and formalized, and proactive outreach to Canadians on preparedness and the availability of consular services will be enhanced.”¹⁵

Ian Shugart, Deputy Minister, also repeated this during the hearing;¹⁶ additionally, Heather Jeffrey, Assistant Deputy Minister, provided the following:

Currently, we have about 220,000 Canadians who are registered with the registry of Canadians abroad. This is a small number relative to the millions who we know travel and reside abroad. One of the reasons that were given—and this has been part of some of the surveys that we have done to look at why Canadians would not register—is awareness. We are redoubling our efforts to have a targeted communications campaign with those travellers, including working with travel agents and other travel industry representatives to promote awareness.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., para. 7.23.

14 Global Affairs Canada, [Detailed Action Plan](#), p. 1.

15 Ibid.

16 House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, [Meeting No. 102](#), 1545.



We feel it's important, and it's part of our communication strategy to find more ways of reaching people.¹⁷

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 1

That, within 120 days of the presenting of this report, *Global Affairs Canada* present the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) cataloguing and implementing the recommendations of lessons-learned reports; and 2) developing a communications and outreach strategy, including an analysis of specific types of travellers, to inform Canadians about international travel risks and what consular services are available in times of crisis.

B. Travel Information and Reaching Canadians More Likely to Face Difficulties Abroad

According to the OAG, the Department “provides its online Travel Advice and Advisories about countries around the world to help inform Canadian travellers before they leave home and while they are away. Advisories include information about local conditions that can affect travellers’ safety, such as security risks, potential health issues, and weather hazards. In response to new events, [GAC] made many (3,772) updates to its travel advice pages in 2017.”¹⁸ The OAG “found that the information contained in travel advisories about potentially dangerous areas or situations was similar to that provided to staff at missions abroad.”¹⁹

The OAG reported that per its own policy, the Department is supposed to “review and update advisories for 229 destinations every 18 months.”²⁰ However, the OAG found that GAC “completed only one third of these mandatory cyclical reviews on schedule.”²¹

Additionally, GAC “developed a communications strategy to reach Canadians travelling abroad generally, but did not target information by type of traveller based on knowledge of their specific needs.”²² The OAG contends that although the Department “has

17 Ibid., 1555.

18 OAG, [Report 7—Consular Services to Canadians Abroad—Global Affairs Canada](#), of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 7.29.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., para. 7.30.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., para. 7.31.

developed advisories for specific types of travellers in specific destinations, it is particularly important that the Department understand how best to reach travellers with important information.”²³

Therefore, the OAG recommended that GAC “should review and update its travel advisories in accordance with its 18-month mandatory cyclical review policy. It should improve its communications and outreach strategy to best target at-risk travellers with information based on an analysis of their needs.”²⁴

In response to this recommendation, the Department agreed and stated that additional measures will be undertaken “to ensure that Travel Advice and Advisory pages are subject to overall cyclical reviews on schedule;” moreover, GAC committed to enhancing its “external communications plan in order to extend its reach through additional targeted briefings and outreach” by September 2018.²⁵

When questioned about this matter, Heather Jeffrey acknowledged the Department’s deficiency and provided the following:

Where we have fallen behind, and where the Auditor General pointed out we need to do better, is in the 18-month cyclical reviews, looking at each country in its holistic stage with all of the different pieces of advice to make sure there are no inconsistencies. We have, as a result, put in place additional capacity to ensure that we achieve that and reduce the backlog.²⁶

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 2

That, by 31 October 2018, *Global Affairs Canada* present the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) reviewing and updating its travel advisories in accordance with its 18-month mandatory cyclical review policy; and 2) improving its communications and outreach strategy to best target at-risk travellers with information based on an analysis of their needs.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., para. 7.32.

25 Global Affairs Canada, [Detailed Action Plan](#), p. 2.

26 House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, [Meeting No. 102](#), 1600.



C. Contacting or Assisting Canadians Detained Abroad Within Service Standards

The OAG found that Departmental officers “did not always contact Canadians who had been arrested or detained abroad within its service standards, and case files often provided no explanation as to why no contact was made.”²⁷ It also found that “the level of consular assistance varied from one case to another.”²⁸ Moreover, although consular assistance can vary due to local conditions or the judgment of the consular officer, the OAG noted that GAC’s files lacked evidence to explain such variation.²⁹

Additionally, the OAG found that in cases involving allegations of mistreatment or torture of Canadians detained abroad, “consular officers took immediate action to contact detainees and make in-person visits when possible;”³⁰ however, “it took between one and six months for departmental officials to formally assess the allegations. Also, the Department did not provide sufficient training to consular staff on how to conduct prison visits.”³¹

As part of this audit, the OAG conducted a case study using a sample of Canadians arrested and detained abroad.³² The study aimed to determine how well GAC followed its operational procedures; its results are summarized as follows:

- Based on an analysis of how and when GAC contacted affected Canadians, “half of the 1,600 individuals arrested and detained each year would not be contacted within 24 hours. Most would be contacted within one month of the Department being notified.”³³
- In 15 out of 101 cases, “detainees were not contacted as frequently as required,” with no explanation on file; in two cases, “the consular officers were denied access by foreign governments.”³⁴

27 OAG, [Report 7—Consular Services to Canadians Abroad—Global Affairs Canada](#), of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 7.33.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., para. 7.40.

33 Ibid., para. 7.43.

34 Ibid., para. 7.44.

- Although 96% of consular officers received training on arrest and detention and/or torture and mistreatment, 44% had done so more than five years prior.³⁵ Also, GAC “did not provide cyclical or refresher training on arrest and detention for consular staff.”³⁶

Hence, the OAG recommended that GAC should “strengthen its quality control process to ensure its consular officers contact and offer to help Canadians who have been arrested or detained, with a focus on those who may be at greater risk because of who or where they are. As well, consular officers should receive dedicated, cyclical training on arrest and detention cases throughout their careers. Such training should include how to conduct prison visits and provide tools for detecting incidents of torture, abuse, or mistreatment.”³⁷

The Department agreed with this recommendation, and in its action plan, committed to the following by September 2020:

- “Service standards and quality control processes will be clearly defined and universally understood, with resulting improvements in data quality and performance.
- Implementation of new Case Management systems with improved data management and quality control capabilities will ensure consistent service delivery across the network.
- Consular officers will benefit from enhanced training on arrest and detention, and on the detection of incidents of torture, abuse or mistreatment, and will be better equipped to handle these situations.
- Recurrent and cyclical training will be made available to consular officers to ensure knowledge is maintained and enhanced.”³⁸

When asked about what assurances the Committee could get that these efforts will continue in the long-term—as opposed to just short-term “fixes”—Ian Shugart replied as follows:

35 Ibid., para. 7.51.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid. para. 7.52.

38 Global Affairs Canada, [Detailed Action Plan](#), p. 3.



Management and consular officer [CO] formal training is an annual event in the department. This training program will become a formal part of that annual training. It will be going on in a few weeks. We're engaged in formal training of our outgoing heads of mission currently, last week and this week, and CO training comes immediately after that. Our training program will be available for scrutiny in that regard at any time.³⁹

Notwithstanding these developments, the Committee recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 3

That, within 120 days of the presenting of this report, *Global Affairs Canada* present the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) reviewing and strengthening its quality control process to ensure its consular officers contact and offer to help Canadians who have been arrested or detained, with a focus on those who may be at greater risk because of who or where they are; and 2) dedicated, cyclical training on arrest and detention cases throughout consular officers' careers, including how to conduct prison visits and provide tools for detecting incidents of torture, abuse, or mistreatment.

D. Providing Passports and Other Travel Documents to Canadians Abroad

According to the OAG, GAC and "Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC] share the responsibility for delivering passports to Canadians abroad. [IRCC] is ultimately responsible for the entire passport program. Its performance target is to deliver 90% of regular passports within 20 business days of receiving a complete application. [GAC] is responsible for administering passport services at missions abroad. This includes reviewing applications for completeness and accuracy, entering data, and approving applications for processing by [IRCC]. Global Affairs Canada has committed to processing applications within 7 days of receiving a complete application."⁴⁰

As part of this audit, the OAG analysed "case management data for all regular passports processed between 1 January 2016 and 30 June 2017 at 125 missions around the world. These missions delivered 286,165 passports during that time" and "compared processing times with Global Affairs Canada's internal and published service standards."⁴¹

39 House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, [Meeting No. 102](#), 1630.

40 OAG, [Report 7—Consular Services to Canadians Abroad—Global Affairs Canada](#), of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 7.58.

41 *Ibid.*, para. 7.67.

The OAG reported that slow “processing at missions was part of the problem in meeting the service standard. For passports to be issued within 20 days, missions must process a completed application within 7 business days of receipt.”⁴² It also found that GAC “failed to process one quarter of applications within 7 days of receipt. In fact, in all cases where passports were issued late, Global Affairs Canada had taken longer than 7 days to process the applications.”⁴³

As well, the OAG “identified instances where consular staff used an incorrect date for passport processing that likely caused performance results to be overstated, including at several high-volume missions.”⁴⁴

As a result, the OAG recommended that GAC should “examine the reasons for performance variations in passport delivery at its missions abroad in order to improve performance. It should also address weaknesses in its data quality for monitoring performance.”⁴⁵

The Department agreed with this recommendation and in its Detailed Action Plan stated that it will “analyze performance and data quality variations and, in cooperation with [IRCC], put in place a program to address them. Additionally, [GAC] will review and define reporting standards and ensure that these processes are reflected in the business requirements of new IT systems, already in development, to ensure better oversight of passport delivery service.”⁴⁶ These actions will be implanted in two phases: “interim measures to be completed by Fall 2018, with the final IT systems to be fully functional no later than May 2021.”⁴⁷

Additionally, Ian Shugart acknowledged this matter to the Committee and provided further explanation:

[There] are gaps in the case files, sometimes because of the burdens consular officers face. The completion of the case file can be put aside while the management of the file is pursued with local authorities, and so on. It shouldn't be the case, in a perfect world, that the data would not be included in the file. I think it is a situation that naturally arises on the ground in the press of these situations.

42 Ibid. para. 7.71.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid. para. 7.70.

45 Ibid., para. 7.73.

46 Global Affairs Canada, [Detailed Action Plan](#), p. 4

47 Ibid.



We have responded to that by improving the training of consular officers. In a network as broad as ours and with the huge variety of circumstances Canadians will face, this is a significant undertaking to ensure that the discipline is consistent right across the network. That is our objective, though, and that is what we will be setting out to do.⁴⁸

As the Committee places great importance on the sound collection and use of quality data, it recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 4

That, within 120 days of the presenting of this report, *Global Affairs Canada* present the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) examining the reasons for performance variations in passport delivery at its missions abroad in order to improve service delivery; and 2) addressing weaknesses in its data quality for monitoring performance.

E. Tracking Timely Delivery of Urgent Travel Documents

The OAG found that the Department “delivered temporary passports and emergency travel documents to Canadians abroad within about 72 hours of receiving requests, but did not track whether this timing met applicants’ travel needs.”⁴⁹

The OAG explained that between 1 January 2016 and 30 June 2017, GAC prepared 4,301 emergency travel documents for urgent travel (in the place of regular passports) and found that about “88% of emergency travel documents were ready before the expected date of travel and met travellers’ requirements.”⁵⁰ Moreover, the Department prepared 79% within three days of their request, with most issued within two days; however, in the “remaining cases, missions took anywhere from 4 to 96 days to issue the documents.”⁵¹

Consequently, the OAG recommended that GAC should “monitor its delivery of temporary passports and emergency travel documents to assess performance in meeting travellers’ requirements.”⁵²

48 House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, [Meeting No. 102](#), 1600.

49 OAG, [Report 7—Consular Services to Canadians Abroad—Global Affairs Canada](#), of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 7.74.

50 *Ibid.*, para. 7.80.

51 *Ibid.*

52 *Ibid.*, para. 7.82.

In response, GAC agreed with this recommendation and per its action plan, committed to further developing its monitoring system for the delivery of emergency travel documents and temporary passports—in conjunction with IRCC—by October 2018.⁵³

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 5

That, within 120 days of the presenting of this report, *Global Affairs Canada* present the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report on the results of the updated monitoring system, including its delivery of temporary passports and emergency travel documents to assess performance in meeting travellers' requirements.

F. Aligning Mission Resources with Workloads

The OAG noted that the Department “did not track performance for most of its consular services and did not have information available to ensure consistent service across its missions,” and thus, “could not ensure that its staff were properly allocated to provide timely and effective services.”⁵⁴

For example, the OAG found that GAC “monitored its performance for only 3 of the 52 service standards posted on its website. These standards cover a broad range of activities, such as assisting travellers with emergencies, monitoring prisoners, issuing passports, and providing information about Canada. Department officials confirmed that they have not reviewed service standards in more than two decades and that performance against the standards has not been monitored **due to poor data quality.**”⁵⁵

Thus, the OAG recommended that GAC should “update its performance standards for the delivery of key consular services across its missions and review the level of consular resources allocated across its missions to ensure an effective, consistent level of service to Canadians abroad.”⁵⁶

The Department agreed with this recommendation and in its Detailed Action Plan stated that it has “begun a review of the consular services provided with a view to updating and modernizing existing service delivery standards. Additionally, [GAC] will review its

53 Global Affairs Canada, [Detailed Action Plan](#), p. 5.

54 OAG, [Report 7—Consular Services to Canadians Abroad—Global Affairs Canada](#), of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 7.83.

55 *Ibid.*, para. 7.89.

56 *Ibid.*, para. 7.91.



resource allocation methodology to ensure that the distribution of resources is optimized across the mission network,”⁵⁷ by March 2019.

When questioned about such inconsistencies across missions, Ian Shugart acknowledged this challenge, and repeated the Department’s commitment to addressing it:

We have responded to that by improving the training of consular officers. In a network as broad as ours and with the huge variety of circumstances Canadians will face, this is a significant undertaking to ensure that the discipline is consistent right across the network. That is our objective, though, and that is what we will be setting out to do.⁵⁸

To help ensure consistency of service across all of Canada’s foreign missions, the Committee recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 6

That, within 120 days of the presenting of this report, *Global Affairs Canada* present the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) updating its performance standards for the delivery of key consular services across its missions; and 2) reviewing the level of consular resources allocated across its missions to ensure an effective, consistent level of service to Canadians abroad.

G. Consular Services Fee and Cost Recovery

The OAG found that GAC “did not have reliable information to calculate the cost of consular services, which is necessary to set its fee for these services. It also did not track the performance of many of its consular services.”⁵⁹

The Department began charging the \$25 fee for consular services in 1995⁶⁰. According to the “2008 May Report of the Auditor General of Canada, [Chapter 1–Management of Fees in Selected Departments and Agencies](#), “[the OAG] examined the Department’s method for determining the fee it charged for consular services” and “found insufficient support for the cost estimates used to set the fee and recommended that the

57 Global Affairs Canada, [Detailed Action Plan](#), p. 6.

58 House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, [Meeting No. 102](#), 1600.

59 OAG, [Report 7–Consular Services to Canadians Abroad–Global Affairs Canada](#), of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 7.92.

60 *Ibid.*, para. 7.97.

Department review its estimates to set an appropriate fee⁶¹. However, it has not changed the fee since then. As well, a 10-year passport is now available, but [GAC] charges the same \$25 fee for both 5- and 10-year passports.”⁶²

Additionally, the OAG reported that in “the 2016–17 fiscal year, [GAC] collected \$105 million in consular services fees, an amount that did not cover the estimated cost of providing consular services in the same year. The Department’s calculation of the cost of providing consular services shows an almost fourfold increase since 1995: from \$37 million then to \$131 million in the 2016–17 fiscal year. Revenues are expected to decline further as more people purchase the 10-year passport, leading to future funding shortfalls.”⁶³ Moreover, the OAG found “that the Department had not developed a plan to resolve these shortfalls.”⁶⁴

Lastly, the OAG found that GAC “did not have a reliable method to calculate the cost of providing consular services (the amount used to set its fee and funding arrangements).”⁶⁵ In addition, it “did not track the extent to which many of its consular services met service standards relevant to the consular service fee. The new Service Fees Act came into effect in June 2017 and requires departments to report detailed performance information about the services for which they charge a fee. Guidance outlining the expected performance tracking and reporting was under development at the time of [the] audit.”⁶⁶

Hence, the OAG recommended that GAC should “update the cost method it uses to support the consular service fee and its funding arrangements. It should also update its performance information for the consular service fee.”⁶⁷ **This would, in fact, be the second time the OAG has made a similar recommendation to the Department regarding the administration of fees.**

In response to this recommendation, the Department agreed and stated in its action plan that it will “review and update the current methodology and costing elements” as well as “further develop its mechanisms for measuring performance against service

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., para. 7.98.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., para. 7.99.

66 Ibid., para. 7.100.

67 Ibid., para. 7.101.



standards, including through the implementation of a new case management system.”⁶⁸ These actions are scheduled to be completed by September 2018 and October 2021, respectively.

When questioned about this matter, Heather Jeffrey explained that part of this could be attributed to the issuance of ten-year passports, as follows:

[The] projection comes from the fact that the consular service fee of \$25 has remained the same, irrespective of whether it was a five-year or a 10-year passport that was issued. The move to the majority of Canadians taking on passports for 10 years leads to a significant reduction in the revenues, because that \$25 fee is being collected only every 10 years instead of every five years.⁶⁹

Notwithstanding this explanation, the Committee nevertheless recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 7

That, within 120 days of the presenting of this report, *Global Affairs Canada* present the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) updating the cost method it uses to support the consular service fee and its funding arrangements; and 2) updating its performance information for the consular service fee.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY

When questioned about the Department’s internal audit practices, Ian Shugart provided the following:

We have internal audit and evaluation. In fact, we've had an evaluation of the consular service done within the last year and that is posted on our website. Internal audit in departments is under the authority of the deputy minister. Currently we do not have an internal audit on the consular program, but it would be a fair subject. I don't think we would do it in light of the work the Auditor General has just done. The standing committee of the House is also doing a study on the consular program.⁷⁰

68 Global Affairs Canada, [Detailed Action Plan](#), p. 7.

69 House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 5 June 2018, [Meeting No. 102](#), 1700.

70 *Ibid.*, 1635.

He then explained that although evaluations do not have the “same assurance element” as audits, there were strong correlations between the findings of the Department’s evaluation and the OAG audit.⁷¹

Although this is just one example, the Committee believes that federal departments and agencies should make the best use of internal audit functions to identify and rectify concerns sooner. This will help ensure that Canadians are getting the results they deserve.

CONCLUSION

The Committee concludes that “Global Affairs Canada did not have the performance information necessary to ensure it adequately responded to requests for consular assistance from Canadians travelling or living abroad;” also, the Department’s provision of consular services varied greatly across missions.⁷² Finally, since “it did not track performance results for most of its consular services, [GAC] could not ensure that services were effective or appropriate.”⁷³

To address these concerns, the Committee has made seven recommendations to help the Department ensure it improves its service provision in a consistent manner. This will help safeguard Canadians travelling abroad, especially those in vulnerable circumstances.

71 Ibid.

72 OAG, [Report 7–Consular Services to Canadians Abroad–Global Affairs Canada](#), of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 7.102.

73 Ibid.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND ASSOCIATED DEADLINES

Table 1 – Summary of Recommended Actions and Associated Deadlines

Recommendation	Recommended Action	Deadline
Recommendation 1	<i>Global Affairs Canada</i> should present the Committee with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) cataloguing and implementing the recommendations of lessons-learned reports; and 2) developing a communications and outreach strategy, including an analysis of specific types of travellers, to inform Canadians about international travel risks and what consular services are available in times of crisis.	120 days of the presenting of this report
Recommendation 2	GAC should present the Committee with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) reviewing and updating its travel advisories in accordance with its 18 month mandatory cyclical review policy; and 2) improving its communications and outreach strategy to best target at-risk travellers with information based on an analysis of their needs.	31 October 2018
Recommendation 3	GAC should present the Committee with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) reviewing and strengthening its quality control process to ensure its consular officers contact and offer to help Canadians who have been arrested or detained, with a focus on those who may be at greater risk because of who or where they are; and 2) dedicated, cyclical training on arrest and detention cases throughout consular officers' careers, including how to conduct prison visits and provide tools for detecting incidents of torture, abuse, or mistreatment.	120 days of the presenting of this report
Recommendation 4	GAC should present the Committee with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) examining the reasons for performance variations in passport delivery at its missions abroad in order to improve service delivery; and 2) addressing weaknesses in its data quality for monitoring performance.	120 days of the presenting of this report

REPORT 7, CONSULAR SERVICES TO CANADIANS ABROAD –
 GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA, OF THE 2018 SPRING
 REPORTS OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Recommendation 5	GAC should present the Committee with a report on the results of the updated monitoring system, including its delivery of temporary passports and emergency travel documents to assess performance in meeting travellers' requirements.	120 days of the presenting of this report
Recommendation 6	GAC should present the Committee with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) updating its performance standards for the delivery of key consular services across its missions; and 2) reviewing the level of consular resources allocated across its missions to ensure an effective, consistent level of service to Canadians abroad.	120 days of the presenting of this report
Recommendation 7	GAC should present the Committee with a report outlining the progress made regarding 1) updating the cost method it uses to support the consular service fee and its funding arrangements; and 2) updating its performance information for the consular service fee.	120 days of the presenting of this report

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Ian Shugart, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Heather Jeffrey, Assistant Deputy Minister, Consular, Emergency Management and Security	2018/06/05	102
Office of the Auditor General Michael Ferguson, Auditor General of Canada Carol McCalla, Principal		

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 102 and 108](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Kevin Sorenson, P.C., M.P.
Chair

