

**AUDIT  
OF  
THE PERMANENT MISSION OF CANADA  
TO THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES**

**WASHINGTON**

**April 2000**

**Audit Division ( SIV )**

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## **Executive Summary**

An audit was conducted of the Permanent Mission of Canada to the Organization of American States (PRMOAS) operations on December 9 and 10, 1999. The audit was carried out in conjunction with a comprehensive audit of the Washington bilateral Mission. Because the majority of administrative services to the PRMOAS is provided by the bilateral Mission through a Cost Sharing Agreement, this audit did not include a review of these services and did not examine the interface between the two missions.

The audit found the PRMOAS to be a well-managed operation, with highly motivated and skilled staff, offering an environment which brings out the best in people.

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Communications are considered to be excellent. The workload is heavy and each officer has a well-defined set of files to manage. Officers are spending considerable time in preparing and participating in numerous OAS Committee meetings ranging from human security to promoting democracy. The results of the survey of a number of Canada's bilateral missions who deal with the PRMOAS were extremely positive concerning the work carried out as well as the service and responsiveness of its staff.

With Canada's relationship with the OAS becoming more important, the PRMOAS appears well positioned to use its extensive multilateral experience to continue to make a constructive and influential contribution to the OAS.

## 1.0 Overview

1.1 Canada's PRMOAS is a well-managed organization with a staff that is skilled, hard working and impressive. All officers are fluent in three languages -- English, French and Spanish. Canada's relationship with the OAS has grown significantly since joining the OAS as a full-time member in 1990. The complexion of the Mission has also changed and its size has grown to the point where staff now includes the Head of Mission (HOM), six officers (five Canada-based) and two support resources, including the HOM's Canada-based Secretary. Two interns also provide Program assistance.

1.2 The relationship Canada has established with the OAS is becoming even more active particularly since the Summit of the Americas was held in Santiago, Chile in early 1998. The number of Team Canada visits and other official visits and trade missions continues to increase and Canada is preparing to host a number of key inter-American events in the next two years. The OAS General Assembly (Foreign Ministers level) is to be held in Windsor in June 2000 to be followed by the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in April 2001. Also, in April 2000, the University of Alberta will be hosting the Model OAS, bringing together university students from across the Americas. The PRMOAS is the focal point for all substantive negotiations on a broad spectrum of agenda items ranging from human security to promoting democracy.

### 1.3 **19(1)**

Communication is excellent and the HOM's open-door policy encourages staff to be frank and open.

1.4 The audit team found the Mission's staff to be a hard-working group of employees. The workload is constant and pressure is high. The workload is driven largely by external forces; including, inter alia, the OAS's general calendar, Ministerial visits, requests from HQ and OGDs, tensions in the region, the Santiago Summit and upcoming major events Canada will be hosting. Day-to-day activities involve intensive preparation for the various OAS meetings as well as ongoing work in the numerous OAS committees. If there is a quiet period, it is following the meeting of the General Assembly which meets in June but this is for only a few weeks at best.

1.5 The workload amongst officers at the Mission is well-defined. Each officer is responsible for managing a number of files (e.g. political and juridical committee, hemispheric security and all working groups) and each officer has a designated backup. Officers spend most of their time at the OAS involved in numerous committees or working groups. Some officers are also required to travel depending on their portfolio. The officers believe the workload is evenly distributed and that the files assigned are generally in keeping with the interests of the individual. At various periods throughout

the year, officers participate in OAS sessions with long committee and working-group meetings. Each year the portfolio of officers is reviewed and files are re-assigned.

## **2.0 Telephone Survey of Client Missions**

2.1 A telephone survey of 12 Missions within Central America, the Caribbean and South America was carried out by the audit team to discuss the nature and quality of relations between Canada's bilateral Missions and PRMOAS. People contacted were particularly positive in their comments concerning the work carried out by PRMOAS. The Quarterly PRMOAS Report was referred to as a valuable tool in providing a good understanding of issues important to Canada and a primary document to aid them in their discussions with the local MFA. The PRMOAS is seen as being service oriented, responsive and willing to get information for the bilateral Missions even when it was not readily available.

2.2 Most of the officers contacted had previous telephone dealings with one or more of the PRMOAS officers - some on a regular basis. Over time, some of them have gotten to know which officers deal with a particular file. The PRMOAS has a "Points of Contact" list which designates the files each officer is responsible for. It would be useful for each of these bilateral Missions to have this listing, not only to indicate the designated officer responsible for a file but also to identify to the Missions which subjects have priority for the Department and the Government.

### **Recommendation for Mission**

**2.3 The Mission should circulate an up-to-date "Points of Contact" listing to all of Canada's bilateral Missions in the region.**

### **Mission Response**

**2.3 In addition to the annual mailing to all regional Missions of the "Points of Contact" list, the Mission distributed a revised version, reflecting changes in responsibilities occasioned by the arrival of a new officer on secondment, on February 7, 2000.**

## **3.0 Workplans**

3.1 The workload of the officers is largely influenced by external forces. The OAS's calendar sets out the agenda for the Mission and each of the committees at the OAS has an established workplan. There are also internal factors influencing their workload. The HOM has established clear goals and objectives for each of the officers at the beginning of the fall session, the Mission's Quarterly Report outlines the priorities for the next quarter and a Critical Operations Path (COP) has been established for the major upcoming events Canada will be hosting. There are also staff meetings in which

each employee is given the opportunity to discuss his/her program. From all accounts, officers know exactly what is expected and there is no confusion as to what each is accountable for.

#### **4.0 Office Space**

4.1 The current configuration of the office with most staff on the third floor and some on the fourth is seen by the Mission as impeding Program delivery. This problem is expected to be remedied with an expansion of space on the third floor. The plan being proposed would maintain the integrity of PRMOAS as a distinctive multilateral Mission and would optimize office and meeting facilities key to the Mission's work. The plan is, however, costly in that the Mission will be taking over space currently occupied by the Reference Library. Any reconfiguration of office space in this building, even if minor, involves a major cost as the Chancery building was constructed with permanency in mind.

#### **5.0 Administration**

5.1 The Locally-engaged Officer, the Alternative Representative (EXT 305976/LE-08) also serves as the Mission Administrative Officer. Several of the lesser administrative responsibilities have moved to the Program Assistant (EXT311386/LE-05). Included in the Administrative Officer's duties, is the preparation of financial forecasts and reporting at mid-year and year end. The Mission is not currently equipped to access the Department's new financial reporting system, IMS. In consequence, the Mission has to rely on the Washington bilateral Mission for financial information. The Mission needs to be provided access to IMS if only for "read" purposes and the Officer needs to be provided IMS training. This Locally-engaged Officer's position has recently been re-written taking into account an expansion of responsibilities. The position description has been submitted to SPSS for re-evaluation. The Mission is awaiting the results of this re-evaluation.

#### **Recommendations for SMS**

**5.2 The Mission should be given access to the new IMS system to facilitate monitoring the financial operations of the Mission.**

**5.3 The Mission Administrative Officer and the Program Assistant should be provided the necessary IMS training.**

#### **SMS Responses**

**5.2 and 5.3 SMS has now developed read only access for IMS and the commensurate training. One of our trainers will be in Washington March 10 through 17 to provide "read only access training" to**

**Embassy users. We will ask our RFO to ensure that PRMOAS staff are enrolled for this session.**

5.4 Administration in the office is handled largely by the Program Assistant. The job also involves a heavy document element which consumes in excess of three hours of each day. There is a heavy flow of materials from the OAS that is received in hard copy twice daily. This material requires cataloguing, photocopying, distributing and filing. Some material is also received electronically from the OAS at a designated PC.

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We believe the Mission needs to closely monitor the situation to ensure that resources are appropriate.

5.5 At the time of audit, appraisals for LES, which under the former regime were a problem at this Mission, were up-to-date with the exception of the above LE Officer (LE-08). This position has just been reclassified to LE-09 following the Mission audit. The Mission also advises that the appraisal was accordingly completed, signed and forwarded on January 20, 2000.

## MISSION RESOURCES FACT SHEET

## Personnel (FTEs)

	CBS	LES	Total
PRMOAS	7	5	12

## Physical Resources

ASSETS	CROWN LEASED	PRIVATE LEASED
OR	1	
SQs		6

## Financial Information 1999/2000

LES Salaries	\$329,400
Operational	540,850
CB Overtime	15,000
Capital	20,300
Total	\$905,550