AUDIT

OF

DIPLOMATIC CORPS SERVICES

DIVISION

(XDC)

July 2002

Audit Division (SIV)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An audit of the Office of Protocol Diplomatic Corps Services Division (XDC) was conducted during November-December 2001. The terms of reference for the audit were presented and accepted by the Deputy Chief of Protocol, the head of XDC.

XDC is a well managed, busy Division that works under pressure much of the time. Within XDC are three operating units: the Documentation Unit, the Accreditation Unit and the Privileges and Immunities Unit. The three units report to the Deputy Chief of Protocol.

A major initiative for the Division has been the seeking of incremental funding for additional positions. This will enable the Division to continue to deliver its primary services without relying on contract or term staff. If unsuccessful, the Division has stated it will need to face the reality of reducing service to clients.

Within this context, the Division has some priorities it needs to address. One is to more clearly define the role of the newly created Deputy Director position. Also, a classification review is underway to assess some of the existing positions deemed under-valued.

The information used for decision-making is considered reliable. The Division would benefit from an electronic "Country Summary" document or database indicating which countries have which privileges and immunities, with any exceptions, suspensions or special situations noted. This database will provide some much-needed corporate memory for the Division. Communications within XDC have improved; however, communications with external clients as regards the Privileges and Immunities Unit need to improve to increase client understanding of the roles and limitations in this area.

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

1.1.1   XDC is one of five divisions under the Office of Protocol (XDX). It has three main service components: the Documentation Unit, the Accreditation Unit, and the Privileges and Immunities Unit. The activities of all three involve a significant amount of knowledge, research, document control, and the sharing and coordination of information within the Division. XDC is staffed with twelve employees, plus an employee from each of the RCMP and CIC, both on secondments. Some XDC staff have determinate status, and there is one contractor. The total budget of XDC is $665,000.

1.1.2   The Division as a whole provides various services to the diplomatic community resident in the National Capital Region and elsewhere in Canada, which numbers approximately 8,000. The Documentation Unit provides documentation services (diplomatic identification cards, for example). The Privileges and Immunities Unit offers services with respect to issues of reciprocity, privileges and immunities, and administers Canada's legal obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic and Consular Relations, as well as a number of other international agreements. The Accreditation Unit deals with all aspects of accrediting Canadian Heads of Mission going abroad, and foreign Heads of Mission coming to Canada. The latter also manages the processes of awarding foreign decorations and awards to Canadian citizens. In carrying out these functions, XDC liaises with other DFAIT organizational units, and with other government departments (most frequently with CIC, CCRA, Transport, and the RCMP). In addition, the Division deals with provincial and municipal governments, as required.

1.2   Audit Objectives

1.2.1   Audit objectives included a review of the management control framework to ascertain if operations are being carried out effectively and efficiently, an assessment of the reliability of information available for decision-making, the determination of the extent of compliance with prescribed policies and procedures, and an assessment of the quality of services provided to Canadian Missions abroad.

1.3   Audit Scope

1.3.1   The scope of the audit included an examination of XDC activities with respect to accreditation, documentation processing, privileges and immunities, and reciprocity. Linkages with the Management Services Division (XDM) were also the subject of review. This scope, contained in the terms of reference, was formulated during the planning phase, and was based on a preliminary review of XDC activities and

services. Resource levels as well as records management were also areas of focus. Time constraints precluded a review of services to foreign missions in Canada.

1.4   Audit Approach

1.4.1   The audit approach consisted of conducting interviews, documenting processes, reviewing file documentation, and analyzing work flows. Interviews were held with all XDC staff and managers, as well as staff and managers in the Bureau Management Services Division (XDM). The staff from CIC and RCMP were also interviewed. Several documents were reviewed, including the business plan, organization charts, job descriptions, country files for reciprocity requests, promotional materials, internal correspondence, and accreditation and documentation files. To assess the quality of service to Canadian Missions abroad in the area of reciprocity, a short questionnaire was sent to twelve Missions which have accessed XDC services within the past two years.

FINDINGS

2.1   Management Control Framework

2.1.1   The organizational structure of XDC was reviewed. Both the Deputy Chief of Protocol (EX-01) and the Deputy Director (FS-02) are new to their positions. The Deputy Director position was staffed in the fall of 2001, after being vacant and frozen for the previous six years. The position was re-activated by the previous Deputy Chief of Protocol in order to provide back-up to the Deputy Chief, manage the Documentation and the Privileges and Immunities Units, and carry out policy work. Each of the Division's three Units is managed by an AS-02 or AS-03.

2.1.2   The current management sees an expanded role wherein the Deputy Director will manage the Documentation Unit but will also manage more of the day-to-day business of the whole Division and to be more involved in longer term policy work. An updated job description has not been completed.

Recommendation for XDC

2.1.3   XDC should update the Deputy Director job description, and finalize the organizational chart.

XDC Response

2.1.3   Although there is not yet a formal job description for this position, an outline was created by the previous Deputy Chief. The position of Deputy Director had long been lacking in the Division, and now that it has been filled, it has become apparent that the role is an important one. The job description will be finalized by December 2002, along with the organizational chart.

Resources

2.1.4   Of particular concern to management is the increased demand for services in recent years, as more and more countries are opening offices in Canada or increasing their staff complement. As a consequence, the delivery of timely services has become more difficult, although the Division receives few complaints because it has succeeded in meeting demands by using both term positions and contractors. The lack of continuity due to term positions and contracts is an issue for the Division. Three additional resources are needed in XDC, specifically one AS-03 for Accreditations, a second RCMP officer, and one CR-05 to assist with cases of debts. This is to cost a total of approximately $185,000 annually. This need is based on historical trends, statistics and work plans which reflect what the activities are and should be to fulfill the

mandate. In a memorandum to MKM dated August 1, 2001, the Chief of Protocol clearly indicated that should incremental resources not be made available, some activities offered by XDC (for example, the Diplomatic Forum, the Northern Tour, or certain elements of outreach) would have to be curtailed or even eliminated altogether. The Audit Team agrees with the need for the three additional positions for XDC to fulfill its mandate as it currently exists.

2.1.5   The continuity of staff is important in an area that is almost exclusively service-oriented. Not only does continuity enable each Unit to deliver effective services, but it also allows for proper back-up. To some extent, current demand for service is being met with the assistance of three temporary employees working in XDC. All are fully occupied, based on interviews and observations by the Audit Team, and the hope is to regularize them. One is a contractor managing the Head of Mission accreditations, and the other two are working in the area of Privileges and Immunities assisting the head of this Unit. The uncertainty created by temporary employment status is affecting the morale of the individuals concerned.

2.1.6   For the Documentation and Accreditation Units, the number of resources is sufficient to meet normal demands for service, although in the fall when demand increases, extra contractors are usually needed. The work done by these Units is, for the most part, very transaction-oriented. For the Privileges and Immunities Unit, the workload is steady throughout the year. The addition of a term CR position has assisted the Privileges and Immunities Advisor, who was previously on his own, to respond much more quickly to requests, and to clear a backlog of filing. At the time of the audit, a contractor had been acting in the vacant position of the Administrative Assistant to the Deputy Chief of Protocol, but was also assisting in the Privileges and Immunities Unit. The staffing of the Administrative Assistant position is underway, and once filled, the continued, long-term need for the contractor in the Privileges and Immunities Unit is doubtful.

Recommendations for XDC

2.1.7   Review the need for the contractor in the Privileges and Immunities Unit.

XDC Responses

2.1.7   The need for the Contractor was reviewed, and due to the volume of work in the Unit, is now working full-time in the Unit. This resource is deemed essential in order to maintain reasonable service standards.

Reclassification

2.1.8   Reclassification of a number of positions has been an on-going issue in XDC for a number of years, but a lack of funding has prevented any concrete action. The view of management is that a number of positions are currently under-valued given their duties and responsibilities. A classification review, managed by the new Deputy Director, is underway. It will be important that this review include a costing and the identification of a source of incremental funding for the higher levels that may result. This will be a challenge for XDC and indeed the Bureau as a whole, since, according to the Area Management Office, neither the Branch reserve nor the Departmental reserve have any available funds. Given no alternatives, the only option is to review priorities from across XDX and attempt to identify funding alternatives from within the Office of Protocol.

Recommendation for XDC

2.1.9   Calculate the cost of the proposed reclassification, and identify a source of funding.

XDC Response

2.1.9   This exercise is now in the hands of a consultant, who is working on a Bureau-wide exercise. The first step is to determine what job classifications are required to accurately reflect the work being carried out by Bureau personnel. If it appears that some positions require upward reclassification, the cost will be calculated at that time and incremental funding will be sought from within the Branch after a review of priorities.

Planning and Directing

2.1.10   A performance agreement has not been formalized for the Deputy Chief of Protocol, however, its development was underway at the time of the audit. Flowing down from this, goals and objectives can be developed for all Division managers. These goals and objectives in turn can be shared with Unit staff, with Unit-specific goals agreed to and reviewed as appropriate. These should form the basis of annual appraisals for all employees.

2.1.11   A more formal process for planning and directing needs to be put in place that would document goals and objectives, and the activities and processes to achieve expected results. With the exception of the Bureau Business Plan, formal planning has not taken place. Managers have a good idea of objectives, but both short and long term plans have not been developed. Appropriate planning and priority setting are required to ensure that long term goals can be attained, and to identify and justify additional

resource requirements. Work plans are necessary to ensure performance is measured against identified and measurable criteria.

Recommendations for XDC

2.1.12   Establish a performance agreement with the Deputy Chief.

2.1.13   Establish goals and objectives for all staff.

2.1.14   Develop Work plans and formalized priority setting.

XDC Responses

2.1.12   The performance management agreement and its components have been discussed orally between the Deputy Chief and the Chief of Protocol, and will be formalized by fall 2002.

2.1.13   This will be done annually and reviewed quarterly.

2.1.14   This will be done annually and reviewed quarterly.

Communications

2.1.15   Communication within the Division has improved over the past six months. Weekly meetings, chaired by the Deputy Chief, have been re-established for Unit managers, and these have been well received. However, Unit staff commented that relevant information is often obtained more informally. This is, in part, the result of not having regular meetings with their managers. Regular meetings, even short ones, are an excellent venue for the exchange of information. Additionally, the minutes from the weekly manager meetings could be circulated to all staff for their information.

2.1.16   Communication outside the Division should be improved. More effective communication with stakeholders such as Canadian Missions abroad and SRD are two examples. SRD management have stated that not all inquiries related to property issues are copied to that Bureau. A short questionnaire was sent by the Audit Team to a sample of Missions that has accessed XDC services within the past two years. The results indicated that, while resources are stretched, XDC has delivered satisfactory services over the period. Some Missions commented on an occasional lack of clarity in responses, a perceived lack of determination to take action, or their misunderstanding regarding XDC's ability to act as regards reciprocity. In cases where inquiries took more time due to a need for more research by XDC, the Missions were sometimes not provided with a time frame for a response, nor an acknowledgment of receipt or interim response. In these cases, the Mission had the impression that nothing was being done

in the interim. Better communicating of the Unit's mandate, role and service parameters would create more realistic expectations for Canadian Missions abroad.

2.1.17   There are no formalized Departmental procedures for dealing with reciprocity issues. Such procedures would allow all Missions to understand the XDC mandate regarding privileges and immunities, and would thus reduce possible confusion and frustration by more closely aligning Mission expectations with XDC service capability. This could be added to the XDX website. The Bureau website is currently well organized and is an excellent forum for information and reference.

2.1.18   Given the nature of the work, the Privileges and Immunities Unit generates responses on a "as long as it takes" basis. The Unit should always notify clients when inquiries demanding research or consultation with OGD's or other outside agencies require more time, and a final reply should be sent to clients for all inquiries made.

Recommendations for XDC

2.1.19   Schedule regular meetings between Unit managers and their staff.

2.1.20   Formulate a communications strategy for inquiries from Canadian Missions abroad.

XDC Responses

2.1.19   Only the Documentation Unit has a sufficient number of staff to warrant regular meetings. Weekly meetings are now scheduled for the Documentation Unit. Meetings for other Units will only be on an "as needed" basis.

2.1.20   Efforts have been made in the past several months to better communicate with Canadian Missions abroad, and to advise them when it would take longer than expected to provide them with an answer. A more formal communication strategy will be completed by December 2002.

2.2   Reliability of Information for Decision-making

2.2.1   Information used for decision-making by the Documentation Unit is based on the documents that are submitted, and on consultation with other Units of the Division such as Privileges and Immunities, as well as the CIC and RCMP Advisors. Once cleared, the foreign representative and dependents are registered and issued a diplomatic identification card. This process is very clearly defined and there are few exceptions. A reporting system keeps management abreast of incidents for reference purposes.

2.2.2   Records management has been computerized in recent years, allowing more reliable information to be available for faster decision-making. The Diplomatic Registry System is an electronic database designed to provide a means of registering and issuing acceptances of diplomatic representatives in Canada. It is an inventory of information that has evolved recently to one that tracks information and activities of members of the diplomatic community. The system is easy to navigate and has an improved reporting module. Users expressed a high level of satisfaction with the database. Two years ago, an upgrade added a new field for tracking "incidents", and this works well, providing detailed information as required by management. Access to this field is appropriately restricted. Other needed upgrades to the system have been identified related to data integrity and further refinement to the access features. A total of $15,000 for the upgrades is in this year's budget.

2.2.3   Having information readily available has been a concern for the Division. To this end, the Privileges and Immunities Unit maintains paper-based files by country for reference purposes. This system works well, although part of the duties of the contractor is to assist with a high volume of filing. Paper-based filing remains important in an area that receives a lot of paper correspondence. Many of the country and subject files were reviewed and found to be in good order and up to date.

2.2.4   The Division's files contain no registry with country summaries. The development of such an electronic document would include a list of all privileges and immunities extended to each country, any exceptions or suspensions, and other major items, permitting easy reference by any member of XDC. This would be particularly useful in case the Privileges and Immunities Advisor is absent. The current system, where all documentation is filed by country but with no summary information sheet, means the Division relies largely on the memory of the Privileges and Immunities Advisor when seeking background or to recall case histories. Creating corporate memory in the Unit is important for back-up purposes, and for the longer term. A compilation of summary information, preferably in an electronic format for ease of editing, would increase response time and efficiency.

Recommendation for XDC

2.2.5   Develop an electronic summary sheet of privileges and immunities for each country.

XDC Response

2.2.5   This recommendation will be implemented during the current fiscal year, budget permitting.

2.3   Procedures

2.3.1   The workload of the Division varies depending on the function. The Documentation and Accreditation Units have a well defined workload based on a relatively routine process that has been established to permit the smooth and expeditious processing of newly-arrived foreign representatives. The services offered include permission to enter Canada, issuance of identity cards, buying and selling of property and automobiles, licences, school registration, etc. This documentation process is supported by a desk book of procedures that is continuously reviewed and updated as needed. A service standard for document processing of five working days has been established, and this standard is always met, except in the fall peak season, when it can extend to as long as ten days. Clients are aware of this standard, are made aware of deviations, and are generally satisfied according to Division staff.

2.3.2   XDC has well defined services and service standards as regards documentation processing and accreditation of Heads of Missions. For the Privileges and Immunities Unit, an informal service standard exists, but because workload cannot be determined in advance, the response can be immediate or may take longer to execute. The turnaround time for an inquiry is usually within a week. For this Unit, there is no high season, and there are a great variety of inquiries and requests. These average over 50 per week, and are responded to on a case-by-case basis, with the priority set and often the decision taken, where required, by the Privileges and Immunities Advisor. The recent addition of support staff to assist with research and to generate more routine responses has permitted greater efficiency in the Unit. A published service standard would assist the Unit in making clients aware of how long a normal request takes to action, and provide a time frame for the Unit staff to work toward.

Recommendation for XDC

2.3.3   As part of a communications strategy, establish and publish services standards for the Privileges and Immunities Unit.

XDC Response

2.3.3   XDC will develop and publish service standards for those elements within its control. It should be recognized that this unit depends on other divisions, other Departments and other levels of government in order to provide answers to privileges and immunities inquiries.