

Minister of
Foreign Affairs



Ministre des
Affaires étrangères

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0G2

OCT 31 2018

The Honourable Kevin Sorenson, P.C., M.P.
Chair
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Sorenson:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the members of the Standing Committee for your commitment to improve Canada's consular services to help safeguard Canadians travelling and living abroad, especially in vulnerable circumstances.

Please accept this letter regarding progress made in the implementation of recommendation 2 of the Fiftieth Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled "Report 7, Consular Services for Canadians Abroad: Global Affairs Canada of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada." A comprehensive response to the Fiftieth Report will be tabled no later than January 29, 2019.

Global Affairs Canada recognizes the importance of providing up-to-date travel information to Canadians about safe travel abroad. Updates to travel advice pages are continually published on a 24/7 basis as situations warrant and in real-time. The department has completed the actions associated with this recommendation, enhanced its efforts and increased its resources to ensure that the travel advice pages are reviewed in accordance with the department's 18-month mandatory cyclical review schedule. The review process has been assessed and updated to ensure it efficiently verifies the content of the travel advice pages, including research and comparison with like-minded countries, editing, translating and publishing online. As a result of these measures, since January 1, 2018, (as at October 18, 2018) 110 travel advice pages have been updated and 2019 cyclical reviews will take place on schedule.

Global Affairs Canada has also completed the development of an enhanced communications plan. In order to improve our knowledge of consular clients and our communications and outreach to them, a baseline assessment of over 23,000 client records was conducted and included a breakdown by age, gender, country and type of service provided. This type of demographic segmentation enables us to target at-risk travellers ahead of their journey and to optimize service delivery based on their needs.

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Public opinion research has been conducted in 2017-2018 with Canadian travellers to better understand their preparations for travel, the information they need and their expectations of consular services, as well as the channels they use to access such information. Based on the findings of the above analyses, a consular communications and outreach strategy has been developed and implementing of targeted initiatives has begun, including campaigns on hurricane season, winter and spring break travel, mental health, sexual assaults, and consular profiles.

Once again, I thank the Standing Committee members for their work in preparing the report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Freeland', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.