

International and Intergovernmental Relations

Summary

Department

The Department has implemented our October 2008 recommendation to obtain assurance that information technology controls have been implemented at its international offices. The Department formalized an IT risk and control framework for the international offices, implemented a secured data transmission system to protect information that is shared between the offices and the Alberta Government, and obtained assurance from the federal Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) that IT security policies and control procedures are in place at the co-located offices—see below.

For outstanding previous recommendations to the organizations that form the Ministry, please see our outstanding recommendations list on page 159.

Findings and recommendations

Department

Matters from prior-year audits

International offices IT recommendations—implemented

Background

In our *October 2008 Report* (page 326), we recommended the Department of International and Intergovernmental Relations obtain assurance that information technology controls have been implemented at its international offices. Alberta has 10 international offices responsible for advancing Alberta's advocacy, trade promotion, investment attraction and other interests. Seven of the 10 offices¹ are co-located in Canadian embassies operated by the federal Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The remaining three offices stand alone, operated by the Department.

Our audit findings

The Department has implemented this recommendation. The Department worked with its international office staff and DFAIT to obtain reasonable assurance that appropriate information security controls are in place to protect information systems at its international offices.

IT risk assessment, policies and security controls

The Department adopted the Government of Alberta's Information Security Management Directives as its IT risk and control framework for the international offices. It conducted risk assessments for all international offices in 2011, to identify risks and the required IT controls to mitigate risks.

The Department obtained DFAIT's information security policies and procedures, to ensure they align with the Government of Alberta standards. To further demonstrate security measures are in place at the DFAIT offices, DFAIT also provided a letter to the Department to assure it has conducted internal testing and gone through accreditation to ensure security controls comply with its policies and procedures.

Secure data transmission

The Department developed IT control procedures for transmitting sensitive information between its international offices and the Department, replacing the practice of sending such information insecurely by fax or email. In 2011, it implemented a secured data transmission system that provides access to a secured method to upload and retrieve information being shared with the international offices. The system resides in the Department's data centre. Access credentials to the system are managed by the Department.

¹ The seven offices co-located with DFAIT are in Beijing, China; Taipei, Taiwan; Seoul, South Korea; Mexico City, Mexico; Munich, Germany; London, United Kingdom and Washington, USA. The three stand-alone offices are in Tokyo, Japan; Hong Kong, China, and Shanghai, China.

