

Under New Management

*Suzanne Laporte
Guides HR Reorganization*

The Department's need for the human touch in human resources is well filled with the appointment of Assistant Deputy Minister Suzanne Laporte.

"We will build a new structure," she says, "and already, major building blocks are in place."



Suzanne Laporte, ADM, Human Resources

Ms. Laporte has returned to her "first love", having made her Public Service debut as a human resources professional. Her appointment reflects the Deputies' commitment to implement HR policy and to deal with the Champions' 138 recommendations.

She brings a fresh and open approach to the implementation of HR policy. "Transparency is key," she says. "I plan to improve all aspects of communications between employees and the HR Bureaux. Written and electronic forms should reinforce but not replace direct, personal contact."

One of Ms. Laporte's first innovations is the organization of a series of informal discussions, with a Champion as host at each event. Both Ms. Laporte and a Deputy will participate to share ideas with employees. She places a high value on integrity, flexibility and equality of access and opportunity for both rotational and non-rotational employees.

She believes that the "spirit of excellence shown by employees in managing international relations can be applied to managing HR," and she challenges employees to apply their skills and sensitivity to this area.

"We all have to play an active role in this process," says Ms. Laporte.

Another HR focus is the locally engaged staff (LES) working at Canadian posts abroad. They constitute 57 per cent of the Department's employee pool.

"The Department could not function without these people and it is time to examine their needs," said Ms. Laporte.

LES Take a Look at Canadians

Learning Possibilities

Locally engaged staff (LES) working at Canadian posts around the world have new opportunities for training and development in the context of the new Human Resources Strategy announced in June.

Pre-departure and intercultural effectiveness courses are offered at CFSI to prepare Canada-based staff being posted to help them understand and adapt to the work and local environment abroad. To perform effectively at post, Canadians have to learn about the perspectives of the LES and the ways to get the job done wherever they may be.

The flip side, of course, is that the LES at post have to deal with Canadians who arrive with Canadian expectations and attitudes. That is why, in the next few months, the Centre for Intercultural Learning (CFSC) will begin a pilot series of courses for LES called "Working with Canadians".

"We are going to try to help LES understand why Canadians are the way they are, why sometimes they behave in ways that seem to make no sense," says Mr. Vulpe, Director, CFSC. "Take a meeting, for example. Canadians run meetings very democratically, ideas are tossed on the table, there is open and sometimes heated debate. Some LES have told us that they are uncomfortable with this format, because in their culture meetings are for announcing decisions, not discussing them. A meeting can be rather dysfunctional when the two cultures approach it so differently."

DID YOU KNOW?

The Centre for Language Training (CFLS) organized courses in 25 languages during the pre-posting period this year.

Twenty-nine spouses and children over the age of 14 received pre-posting language training before leaving. Courses developed foreign language skills to handle emergencies, give simple instructions, obtain information, make purchases, make arrangements, give personal information and understand public announcements.

The average time dependants spent on language training in 1999 was 4.1 weeks, a rise of 32.3 per cent over the same period last year.



Newly appointed Heads of Mission and their spouses nearing the end of their HOM training at a pre-departure reception given by Governor General Romeo LeBlanc on June 11.