

2. The department should establish a small "office of consultation." This unit would supply administrative support to other DFAIT divisions—freeing them from logistics and administration often beyond their normal competence, and reducing the waste of compiling and maintaining multiple overlapping lists of individuals, groups and organizations involved in consultations. The office could operate databases, provide logistical and secretarial services for consultation events, and develop an integrated "best practices" catalogue for use across the department. It would not, itself, conduct consultations; that is the work of line divisions. Nor should the office be connected (or confused) with the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development. The Centre's own mandate requires a fluency in policy content, and an independence, from which arises its singular value. By contrast, the office of consultation should be fully integrated into the organization of the department, giving specialist administrative support. The costs of the office would be offset by savings in other divisions, and would be repaid in better consultation performance. As an alternative -- or in addition -- divisions should each designate officers responsible for the administrative support of consultations; these officers collectively would constitute a departmental committee on consultation practices and administration.

3. The department should accelerate reporting and other forms of follow-up with participants after consultations. In the cases of the Seattle WTO and Toronto FTAA ministerial meetings, as examples, NGO participants otherwise impressed by DFAIT's efforts were discouraged by what they counted as inadequate after-the-fact reporting. There is a feeling among NGOs that their views went unheeded even when they were heard—or at least went unanswered. Insufficient follow-up undermines the good done at Seattle (in praiseworthy briefings for NGOs, among other things) and in Toronto, where some 22 trade ministers met with NGOs. These were two "best practices;" they will be better when followed up with communications that strengthen consultative relationships.

4. The department should enlist more NGO members (and others, including academic experts) to serve on Canadian delegations to conferences and negotiations. The best practice here, and perhaps the longest, is the routine inclusion of NGO and other representatives with delegations to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and related conferences. Membership in delegations immerses NGOs in the real constraints and opportunities of negotiations, encourages coalition-building among like-minded delegations, and creates for DFAIT an efficient feeler-feedback mechanism for testing possible outcomes. NGOs give the department a sense of what domestic Canadian opinion will demand or tolerate, and of how policies or agreements might work in the field. Delegation membership is an especially strong relationship-builder.

5. Even non-fans of DFAIT willingly complimented trade officials who overcame Seattle's crowds and curfews to brief NGOs who were not on the Canadian WTO delegation itself. Transparency amid the turmoil of big conferences is a dispeller of rumour, a builder of trust, and a lesson in the dynamics of multilateralism. The bigger the conference—with long, diverse agendas