

Trade Planning Update By Anne Argyris

The reformed mission planning system was brought to you by TPP division in June 1995 in order to facilitate submission of the 1996/7 trade plans. In the course of using it to create and submit plans, posts provided positive feedback, reinforcing that the system was easy to use and a vast improvement to the planning process. In terms of further enhancement, posts' recommendations indicated the need for refinement of printing and help functions, inclusion of certain missing sectors and multi-user capacity, and elimination of problems experienced involving memory and loss-of-data.

Since then, we have been working hard to develop an on-line version of the planning system which will be analogous but also incorporate the posts' recommended improvements listed above. The new help function, for example, has been improved tremendously by use of screen cam. Accessible through the help menu, the comprehensive user-guide may be printed or viewed.

The on-line version has been tested extensively prior to release to posts and will be made available for creation and submission of the 1997/8 trade plans. Plans will be divided into three sections, including:

- (A) Overview of the Climate for doing Business,
- (B) Post Priority Sectors and Other Opportunities
- (C) Feedback.

An added feature will be the ability of posts to update and make amendments to initial plans throughout the year, thus offering increased flexibility. Furthermore, eventual link with Lotus Notes and web

sites for distribution of the information to OGDs and business clients will be possible. (Posts that do not receive the on-line system will create their plans on WordPerfect.)

For the 1997/8 trade planning cycle, we are taking steps to provide the new system to posts around the end of March. Posts are requested to simply update the information provided in their 1996/7 plans, for submission by April 30th. Posts are also requested to input projects, according to their identified priorities, for submission by May 31st. The WIN regional systems managers may be called upon to provide support and answer posts' questions. At HQ, training is being provided to the geographic divisions to acquaint them with the on-line system.

To expedite MI/I dissemination, TPP has also been actively involved in placing your 1996/7 mission plans on the Faxlink and Infocentre Bulletin Board (IBB). U.S. posts will be pleased to learn that the U-branch has taken the lead in the process of translation and putting their plans on these information services. As more branches rapidly follow this example, posts in other regions can also expect to soon see their plans on these services.

TPP aims to ensure that your 1997/8 trade plans are available on the information services more promptly and is taking steps towards this goal.

Anne Argyris is a member and Deputy Director of Trade Information Systems Division (TPP).

For more information, you may contact her at 996-1907.

Monthly Trade Directors' Meetings

For nearly three years now, on the initiative of Al Kilpatrick, former Deputy Minister of International Trade, (DMT), an informal discussion group has been having one-hour meetings at Headquarters. DMT felt that an exchange of professional ideas and experiences would be beneficial to the Trade Commissioner Service.

The original group consisted of nearly all the directors in the Trade Branch (Trade Promotion

and Policy). Since that time, the group has expanded with the arrival of shared-responsibility desks (general relations and trade) in the geographic branches. Branch directors of economic policy are also included.

The meetings usually give team members an opportunity to present to their colleagues a subject in their area of responsibility. Past discussions have touched on the services available from Statistics Canada, Canada's inter-

national air agreements, personnel management, and the Trade Branch program review. DMT has addressed the group on two occasions.

The meetings take place in the Lester B. Pearson Building on the first Wednesday of every month.

For further information on these meetings, please contact Paul-André Gagnon of Trade Development Operations Division (TOO) at (613) 995-3576.