



In this section, we review for each community of DFAIT the key implications of the several change initiatives described in the preceding section. We note any critical issues that have not been identified previously in this document. Finally we record significant progress made to date on community issues of importance since the first HR strategy was released in April 1997. More detail can be found in the full community-specific HR strategies (expected to be available later this fiscal year).

5.1 THE LOCALLY-ENGAGED STAFF (LES) GROUP

5.1.1 PROFILE

Numerically, the largest personnel system encompasses LES who work only at missions abroad. There are about 4,300 LES employees who support both program delivery, such as international business development, public affairs and cultural affairs, as well as mission administration. All LES are employees of DFAIT, although many support programs of our portfolio partners, especially the immigration program.

The number of LES has grown as Canada-based staff (CBS) has been downsized, and the group now comprises almost 55% of the department. LES represent 80% of DFAIT staff abroad, and play an increasingly important role in the delivery of our programs. They are now expected to advocate Canadian interests, to provide client service and to manage resources in accordance with Canadian standards and expectations.

5.1.2 CLARIFYING THE ROLE OF LES

As we noted last year, we need to align the role of LES with our business purposes. At the moment, there is no clear departmental policy on how resources should be allocated to each mission. In consequence, the role of LES has shifted considerably in recent years, for financial rather than strategic reasons. As expensive CBS positions are reduced in missions, more affordable LES are asked to take on work traditionally done by Canadians. As a result, some mission administrative officers (MAOs) are now LES, and some LES are now doing political analysis. When we shift the balance of our trade resources from Headquarters to the field, cost considerations may cause us to consider LES for new trade positions in missions.

This trend has caused some problems. In some missions, cost-driven conversion of administrative support positions from CBS to LES has left only one Canadian administrative support person in place. In consequence, the work of that person has broadened to encompass all of the duties that must be discharged by a Canadian, at the same time that it has expanded because of other factors such as evolving technology. In some cases, existing security requirements, which were designed on the assumption that two or more CBS administrative support people would be available, have had to be redesigned to accommodate the new reality.