

LES and the New Way Forward

By Bjørn Petter Hernes

On October 1, 2010, it will be 20 years since I walked through the door as a locally engaged employee of the Canadian Embassy in Oslo. I heard about the job opening while I was attending Carleton University in Ottawa. My roommate was a fellow Norwegian whose family missed him so much that they told him about the job to get him to return home. He still had a year left of his studies while I was graduating, so I applied for the position. I was called to an interview in Oslo, got myself a brand new suit and flew over. The rest is history.

More than half my life has revolved around Canada. I have seen a number of changes over the years, as modern communications have changed the way we work. In the “good” old days, we could type a message and send it to Ottawa by “dipmail.” We would relax and wait for a response maybe two

Committees. I hope that in the future there is more emphasis on how to get the best use of LES as a resource and to make us a more integrated part of the DFAIT family.

Bjørn Petter Hernes is an LES public affairs officer and trade commissioner at the Canadian Embassy in Oslo. Last September he won an Osez! Be the Change Award, given each month to individuals and teams that help to advance the DFAIT Transformation Agenda.



Bjørn Petter Hernes holds his Osez! Be the Change Award presented by Ambassador John Hannaford.



Bjørn Petter Hernes (far right) helped to build an inukshuk, which was presented in 2005 as Canada's centennial gift to Norway and stands at Bygdøy in Oslo.

weeks later. In a rush, there was the telex, but I would have to draft a message, give it to my supervisor for signature and then hand it to a communicator to have it transmitted. Today, I can send an email directly to the deputy ministers at DFAIT.

Having lived through and adapted to such advances, I always look for ways to use technology to enhance my work. I have also been involved in the use of the wiki and Connections to work regionally with my colleagues in the Nordic countries, with good results. In Oslo, we use these technologies for a biweekly report, and we will soon launch a standing brief on Connections. In public affairs, we are working on using social media to leverage and deliver our messaging—an exciting prospect.

I am now involved with the InnovAction group, looking at how we can use technology to assist us in our work. Being at a mission, it is exciting to take part in the “HQ buzz” surrounding InnovAction. As one of the LES representatives here for more than a decade, it is good to see the increased attention that Headquarters is paying to LES, for example the efforts to improve communications and to reinforce the role played by LES. These include new vehicles such as the LES Governance Committee, to which I have sent a long message, as well as LES–Management Mission Consultation