

## Consultation Skills Workshop for EBC

*... Of Stakeholders and Best Practices*

A measure of the success of a learning program is the reaction of participants. The Trade Policy Consultations and Liaison Division (EBC) and CFSI have won the best kind of praise for their two January workshops on consultation skills - people have asked for a follow-up. Learning consultation skills couldn't be more topical.

"As the international trade agenda moves from border tariffs and customs procedures to address areas of domestic economic regulation, interest in international rule-making has grown beyond the traditional trading business community. The determination of so many to voice their views and concerns at the WTO conference in Seattle was confirmation of this reality. Government officials must thus develop the skills for effective public consultation with a diversity of stakeholders," says Jonathan T. Fried, Assistant Deputy Minister (Trade and Economic Policy). "The Government is clearly committed to engaging our citizens in developing Canada's trade policy agenda. Its positions at the WTO Ministerial Conference resulted from many months of consultation, both within and outside the federal government. Consultation is an ongoing process and participants in training were interested in acquiring additional skills to face new challenges."

This January, two workshops on consultation training were held at the CFSI Bisson campus. The two-day workshops were developed and customized with the help of CFSD for the Trade and Economic Bureaux, and for colleagues invited from other government departments who participate in many of the same trade policy consultations and who, therefore, can contribute a great deal to, and benefit from, the training. The immediate positive response to the first announcement of the workshop underscored the need for it.

People who enrolled became participants in the design of the course to meet their own needs. This is the second year it has been offered and a significant number of newcomers to the "E" world took part in the training. Some participants already had experience in consultation and were encouraged to participate actively to share their gained expertise.

Day one of the course presented general guidelines and principles of consultation and provided the overall context of the government's commitment. Mr. Fried and Director General John Gero addressed the groups.

Day two was devoted entirely to developing consultation plans related to actual projects some divisions need to pursue. In a step-by-step approach, participants identified the environment within which their consultation would take place, defined their stakeholders and discussed appropriate mechanisms to consult. They dealt with consultation on topical themes related to trade policy, such as patenting of higher life forms and strategic environmental assessment of trade

agreements. Panel discussions by people who are often consulted by the government, such as NGOs, brought practical advice to participants. Best practices and transparency were themes throughout. Participants left the training with a kit of useful tools and tips to conduct effective consultations and, in certain cases, several flip chart sheets of material on their own project.

Follow-up is extremely important. Concerns listed on day one were all dealt with by the end of the second day. Participants were enthusiastic about the workshops. Bianca Bohanen, EBI, who attended in January, says that they serve "as a valuable reference point to improve our methods and approaches in future initiatives."

Most participants have asked for more learning opportunities. EBC is considering a follow-up session in the coming months with those participants who expressed the need for it. Serious consideration is also being given to offering the training for a third time next year.



Adriaan de Hoog, Director General of the Canadian Foreign Service Institute, awarded instructor/facilitator certificates to participants in a program which provided an important professional development opportunity for instructors from a number of different bureaux, involved in the delivery of in-house training courses. This initiative underlined the valuable contribution that functional bureaux make to departmental training initiatives

In the photo, in the back, from the left: Richard Gauthier, TCE, Adriaan de Hoog, CFSI, Luc Cousineau, SMFC, Suzanne Chartrand, JPDT, and Shaun Hopkins, Langevin Learning Services. In middle row: Thérèse St-Denis, SSMH, Aline Taillefer-McLaren, SERV, Jocelyne Jetté, Program Manager, CFSS, and Christine Thibodeau, HRP, seated: Margaret (Sue) Bogue, SXCA, and Charline Malette, SSMH.