

INITIAL PREPARATION

Not all officers will have either the time or the resources to prepare themselves fully prior to departure for Post. It is expected that the initial "self-directed learning" process is a continuum, beginning on notification of the assignment, and stretching into the period after your arrival.

Have you been in touch with your key Departmental contacts?

- Geographic director and desk officer?
- Trade policy divisions?
- Head of Mission and your predecessor?
- Other Canada-based staff going to the Post?

What training have you considered?

- Foreign language -- full-time or part-time?
- Professional courses: management; human rights; consular; appraisal writing; media training; trade specific (e.g. international trade rules, investment, services, sectoral)

Have you taken any steps to arrange Temporary Duty (TD) or have you opted to defer it until later in your posting?

- Have you spoken to APT? Your geographic division? The mission?
- Have you thought about a TD program in Ottawa?
- Are you able to negotiate some time to begin thinking about your program priorities and responsibilities?
- Could you arrange a pre-posting visit in May . . . in time to be involved in the upcoming year's trade planning cycle? (Are you dreaming in Technicolor?)

BACK TO REALITY: THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

What is the nature of the market?

- Have you checked the TID annual plan and Trade Tracking System reports?
- Have you read the standard economic and political reports (i.e. Economist Intelligence Unit reports, regional economic journals)?
- Are there restrictive trade policies or practices, or specific access issues that concern Canadian business? Are they currently under bilateral or multilateral discussion or negotiation?
- What type of firms are attracted to this market (i.e. consultants, services, manufacturers, trading houses)? Are they internationally experienced?
- Are there ethno-cultural business links to Canada or other trading partners?