

# A Better Way Forward for Political Economic Renewal

By Kathy Bunka, Mebs Velji, Marcello DiFranco, New Way Forward Secretariat

By aligning resources with priorities, the New Way Forward allows people to focus on the things that really matter," says Assistant Deputy Minister Peter Boehm, the program's Champion.

"The goal of aligning resources with priorities, as set out in the New Way Forward, means we have to define what we do and for whom," says Boehm. "Does this service support government priorities? Is the request from a defined partner? Is this partner requesting a core service? If the answer to any of these questions is no, we may have to deny a request."

If the New Way Forward is to succeed, Department management and employees have to politely, or diplomatically, say no to requests that don't align with priorities. By reducing services that do not align with priorities, the Department will provide a higher quality of service in areas of priority.

"We can't forget that diplomats need to keep the conversation going to build networks and alliances and to gather information," says Boehm. "And that saying 'no' doesn't always accomplish that." For their part, employees have a right to ask themselves some tough questions when considering turning down a request: "If I don't do this task, who will? Where do I direct the client?"

**"The ever-present skeptic in the back of the room will ask, 'Do you want us to do more with less?' The answer is no...Focus on the things that really matter and we'll see better programme delivery, and with that will come greater job satisfaction."**

— Peter Boehm, Assistant Deputy Minister and Champion of the New Way Forward

Facing a similar challenge, the Trade Commissioner Service provided referrals to local firms offering services ranging from office rentals to event planning. The Political

Economic Program is adopting a similar "serve or refer" approach. "There is a right way and a wrong way to say no to a service request," says Boehm. "Our goal is to ensure that every PE program will have a list of known local service providers. When we can't 'serve' a public or private organization, we'll 'refer' them to an appropriate resource to make sure their needs are met."

Clearly, some longstanding practices will be affected by implementation of the New Way Forward. "Right now, we do everything we're asked to do," Boehm says. "When we prioritize, we'll be better able to demonstrate results achieved for the Government and people of Canada."

The New Way Forward aims for more consistency and standardization in service provision around the world. It also gives managers the flexibility to make judgment calls according to the new standards; at the same time, managers will be held accountable for achieving results on priority files. And senior management has to make it happen by making tough decisions and, sometimes, by saying no.

The Trade Commissioner Service set up a Post Support Unit (PSU) to help with "grey areas and thorny issues." On the political economic side, there is now a Political Economic Renewal Support Unit (PERSU). Says Boehm, "PERSU will look at the issue and recommend a response. If and when needed, I will put on my Champion cap and provide a definitive answer."

When asked why this initiative will succeed when others have failed or stalled, Boehm says, "There's no other choice. In the new government-wide context of results-based management, we have to demonstrate what we're doing and for whom. We have to show how the money is being spent. These are not new concepts and diplomacy is not an exception to the rule."

He adds, "The ever-present skeptic in the back of the room will ask, 'Do you want us to do more with less?' The answer is no, we don't want you to do more with less. We have a finite number of resources. And there is



## At a Glance

More than 800 staff members, including staff from 60 missions abroad, helped determine the seven core services for DFAIT's New Way Forward. The seven services will help the department focus on what really matters.

- Information and Analysis
- Policy Development
- Policy Integration
- Advocacy
- Access
- Program Delivery
- Visits Guidance

only so much we can do, so prioritize. Focus on the things that really matter and we'll see better programme delivery, and with that will come greater job satisfaction."

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