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TCS International is a quarterly newsletter for members of the Trade Commissioner Service (TCS). Its purpose is to facilitate discussion of matters

of common interest and concern among members. Please send your contributions and comments to the TCS divisional e-mailbox, or facsimile at (613) 996-1225. The newsletter is also available on the Intranet at <http://folio.lbp/tcs-sdc/tcs.htm>.

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Dept. of External Affairs
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OTTAWA
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Different Perspectives: A Secondment Experience

By Leslie Scanlon

Leslie Scanlon is a Trade Commissioner on secondment to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

When you think of secondment to a regional office, do you think "out of the system", "bad career move", or "I can't see it being interesting"?

Think again. Admittedly, my first reason for considering Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) was geographic, as I've always wanted to live in Vancouver. While that was the impetus, the experience has been much more than I expected. Having spent three years in the embassy in Tokyo handling agri-food and fisheries prior to heading to the west coast, I didn't expect to find much new at AAFC in terms of job package and content. Unlike DFAIT, however, where work assignments are rotational, individual AAFC officers (and Industry Canada) maintain a presence in the regions over time, and are therefore well known to the companies with which they work. They have developed a corporate memory that is an

invaluable domestic resource for Canadian consulate and embassy staff (much like commercial officers overseas). Moving from a consulate or embassy to a regional office of any department is arguably more of a continuation of business approach than going from post to headquarters. Regional offices, in the AAFC context, are satellites of the centre, and are generally as independent as a post. They are also the first line of contact with the Canadian private sector, and hence a continuation of the company contact that most Trade Commissioners enjoy in their overseas assignments.

Language capability was interesting: the Vancouver experience is that English/French bilingual officers are a rarity, read "don't exist", so DFAIT officers are welcome (though the reality is that a French call is rarely received). Japanese, Mandarin and Cantonese, however, are available via office staff, which makes good sense in this marketplace. Other departments will be inter-

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There is trade in these colonies for our people if they go the right way about it.
John Larke, Canada's first Trade Commissioner — in a letter to HQ from Sydney in 1895.

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