

AT YOUR SERVICE: *A message from the Editor*

Many thanks to all of you who took the time to comment on the rebirth of this newsletter. Your support and suggestions are really appreciated; it's great to know our initial efforts are on the right track.

We kicked off the Centenary with a panel discussion and ceremony here in headquarters on January 12th under the theme "The Trade Commissioner Service: Launching the Second Century." This successful event attracted a standing-room-only crowd of several hundred current and former TCS staff, and highlights have been sent out to posts on video. This newsletter will keep you posted on plans for other Centenary activities in the months ahead.

You have already received letters from Al Kilpatrick and Brian Schumacher, setting out

objectives to help the TCS continue to evolve to meet the rapidly changing needs of Canadian business. Communications on market intelligence and on best practices has been sent, and information on many other high priority topics is being prepared.

We are sending the trade program manager at each post the text of a recent speech by Germain Denis on Canada's future interest in trade policy and ask it to be circulated. Readers in Canada should request a copy from TOO. Please contact Greg Bates at 995-7786.

We will do our best to keep you informed and involved, and we always welcome any comments you have.

Mike Spencer

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social and environmental ramifications of trade deals. They will complement the ITAC's broad national focus by providing in-depth advice on specific trade matters. They are not meant to replace existing structures, but rather to work in conjunction with the ITAC and SAGITs.

This new configuration has, however, called into question the continued relevance of the ITAC and SAGITs themselves. Original mission accomplished, what will constitute their new roles? Debate at recent SAGIT meetings has centered around whether to justify the group's continued existence by redefining its role, or to call it a day and disband. Indeed, in the current tight fiscal environment, pressure is increasing for government expenditures to show clear purpose and deliver results. To quote one seasoned Trade Commissioner recently overheard in the corridors of Lester B. (in a different context), "How do we answer the Preston Mannings of

the world?" Although members do not receive monetary compensation for their participation, many come from afar, and taxpayers pay travel and per diem expenses.

On the other hand, consultation in the pre-ITAC days was ad hoc and hit-and-miss, a situation to which no one would like to return. One member compared the issue to having a boss with an open-door policy.

While there may be fewer occasions to walk through that door, this is not reason enough for closing it completely. Once closed, it may prove difficult to re-open, should the need arise. As well, although plenty of the work originally envisioned for the SAGITs will most likely be done by the new Task Forces, SAGITs will remain crucial in ensuring sectoral interests are protected. The 25-odd members of each Task Force will be drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds, and will not necessarily have sectoral expertise. SAGITs will be needed to review the work of the Task Forces and provide them with input on a

number of key issues, from implementation of the NAFTA and the Uruguay Round results, to inter-provincial trade barriers.

The most successful trading nations are those which have close government-industry cooperation. Witness, for example, the "Japanese Miracle", central to which, many argue, has been the state's shared role in the economy with the private sector, and the collaboration between the two to further the nation's developmental goals. In the United States as well, a consultative mechanism has been legislated into place.

Clearly, at the price of airfare and other expenses, the government as a service supplier obtains "market intelligence" in its most economical form. Private sector participants get unique access to policy makers to communicate their interests. As the focus shifts from trade negotiations to trade policy issues and more effective program delivery, this evolving relationship may well be moving into its most useful era yet.