

LES is MORE

We have all heard the numbers: three out of four DFAIT employees abroad are locally engaged—LES, as they are known. How those numbers add up in a practical sense is what makes LES so valuable—and that is the focus of this issue of *Our World*.

As all Canada-based (CBS) managers and officers who have served abroad can attest, LES are not just the backbone of the department's offices abroad, they are also stakeholders in the success of Canada's international agenda. They bring to the job a unique package of talents to help shape that agenda and deliver it. They work side by side with CBS in identifying Canada's interlocutors, delivering its messages and ensuring that this work remains part of our institutional memory.

Between the two of us, we personally have had the honour of working in missions on three continents with LES who are dynamic, enthusiastic and committed to promoting Canada's image and presence in the world. Without these LES to advise and assist us, we would find the task of representing Canada virtually impossible.

A key priority of DFAIT's Transformation Agenda is improving communications with and management of LES. The movement of the bureau responsible for LES to the International Platform has brought synergy to addressing long-standing issues. The LES Governance Committee has been established to bring to the forefront and address matters from compensation to training, mobility and empowering LES to fully develop their potential. Finally, the establishment of LES management consultative boards at each of our missions ensures that LES have a regular channel for meetings with senior management. An important objective of all of these efforts is to ensure that LES are part of the larger, whole-of-government presence abroad. More than 30 percent of LES directly deliver the programming of 21 partner departments, agencies and co-located provincial offices. We are only at the beginning of a new and long-term commitment to renew and strengthen the LES workforce.



Louis Marcotte, Director General of HR Services—International Platform, and Alex Bugailiskis, ADM for Latin America and the Caribbean and Chair of the LES Governance Committee

LES are drawn from the best and brightest across the globe: good people doing fantastic things, sometimes under challenging circumstances. In this issue you will read about the dedication of LES in Haiti, who came to work despite personal hardship suffered in the earthquake. There are stories by and about LES, including a brand-new LES, one with decades of experience and one who's not actually local but from a third country. There are LES volunteers, an LES trade commissioner, an LES transformation champion and LES who are learning about Canada and Canadians as they train in Ottawa.

These LES will inspire you with their dedication, energy and wisdom. We hope you enjoy their stories.

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