

What is your office environment like?

The office is one large room shared by four political officers. A steady stream of people—from the military and/or other departments—come in to discuss common files or project development. The office sometimes feels cramped and there isn't much privacy. Frequent computer difficulties also contribute to the challenge of working here.

What are your living quarters like?

I have a small private bedroom with a single bed. The walls are made from thin plywood, which means I always know if my neighbour is awake or suffering from a cold. There is no window in the room. There are communal ablution facilities in the centre of the camp. My room is relatively luxurious, as many soldiers sleep four or more to a room.

What is it like living on an ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) military base?

A whole different culture exists in the military—it's vital to learn the various ranks and functions of the soldiers. Regular training takes place on base. At various times of the day, you can hear the sound of guns at the firing range as the troops hone their skills. Loud vehicles are constantly on the move as the military conducts patrols in the city and neighbouring districts. Helicopters are coming and going all day, including in the evening and even at night. Eventually you get used to the sound of helicopters, and I can now differentiate which type of helicopter is landing simply by the sound of the rotors.

The most difficult experiences have been the memorial ceremonies held whenever a soldier

has died. Since my deployment, there have been eleven ceremonies—ten for Canadians and one for an American. These ceremonies remind everybody of the dangers that constantly face us and the real threat that exists here in Afghanistan. After each ceremony, everybody hopes it's the last one they will have to attend.

What do you like best about your job?

The people I work with. People here are very smart and dedicated to their jobs. Our team members come from diverse backgrounds, which creates a great work dynamic. Each day is a learning opportunity and full of new challenges. As well, working with such great people ensures that even when someone is feeling down or getting tired of the fast pace of work, there are others looking out for him or her—others help cheer them up and offer help to get through the rough spots.

Julie Lewis went to work as Trade Commissioner for the Vancouver Regional Office to be closer to prominent Canadian companies, particularly in the IT sector. Her posting has opened up a whole new window into the telecommunications world.

Mobile Space

Tell us about yourself.

I am a 29-year-old Ottawa native. I began my career with the Department in 2002 as a commerce officer. My current assignment is Trade Commissioner at our regional office in Vancouver. I am here for the next four years, which means I will be in Vancouver during the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games—a very exciting time for business development and foreign investment opportunities for Canada. I will also be here to follow the economic legacy of the games. I already have some 10 or 12 guests lined up to stay in my one-bedroom apartment during the Olympics!

What are your main responsibilities?

My sector portfolio includes the information and telecommunications sector and advanced materials (e.g., semiconductors, superconductors, optics, lasers, sensors). I am also responsible for coordinating the investment file for our office. I help British Columbia-based companies active in the above sectors (especially wireless and telecommunications) in their international business efforts. Wireless communications is one of British Columbia's distinct competencies in information technology,

with over 250 companies active in this sector. There are some pretty amazing mobile communications companies in Vancouver. In my first few outcalls with companies, I have had the chance to witness how rapidly the mobile space is changing. My work involves providing the core services of the Trade Commissioner Service to the British Columbia business community, including providing timely and accurate marketing information and intelligence to companies and providing companies with contact information for various sources of financing. I work quite closely with the Province of British Columbia and some of the well-established industry associations in town, including Wireless Innovation Network BC, and the British Columbia Technology Industry Association. My efforts will hopefully lead to greater international opportunities for British Columbia exporters in the technology sectors.

What is your typical work day like?

My typical day begins with sifting through emails from colleagues who are already halfway through their day in Ottawa. I often hear from incoming foreign investors who are looking to partner with a local companies.



Working in Vancouver ensures that Julie Lewis has more direct contact and greater interaction with Canadian companies.

A good portion of my day is spent contacting other partners, such as Invest BC or the Vancouver Economic Development Commission, to put together programs for