Enclosure 1.

BRIEFING NOTE FOR MS. JANE DOE,
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Launch of the Industry in Action Program

ISSUE

The issue statement should make a brief link with the point in the letter that refers the reader to this briefing note. For example: "You will attend an informal reception following the launch ceremony for the Industry in Action Program. During the reception, stakeholders may ask you about the program."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q.1 What are Qs & As used for?

A.1 Qs & As should anticipate questions that might be posed to the reader at a meeting or event, or in dealing with the news media. They should prepare the reader for possible criticism, questions on contentious issues, and requests for explanations of complex concepts.

Q.2 Who needs to sign off on Qs & As?

A.2 You will probably need to get a sign-off from your communications branch if the Qs & As are for use by the reader with the public or the news media. Your director and your director general will probably need to sign off on them as well.

Q.3 Are all Qs & As for use in public?

A.3 No. For example, in some cases Qs & As would be used in a meeting with stakeholders with no media present. However, it is still possible that those present might quote the reader to the media.

Sub-Headings

Q.4 Can Sub-Headings Be Used in Qs & As?

A.4 Yes. With lengthy Qs & As, sub-headings should be used to enable quick reference.

BACKGROUND

Note that Qs & As are similar to responsive talking points.

Background provides information, history or explanations that will help the reader to understand the nature of an issue or its context.

Background can be supplemented by annexes to the briefing note. However, that starts to create a complex format. You might want to consider creating a briefing book instead of a complex series of briefing notes and annexes to briefing notes.

CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations are used to show that the answers we provide are reasonable responses to the questions. This entails providing options, pros and cons, analyses arguments and key policy priorities as needed, given:

- the issues at stake;
- your knowledge of what your reader knows and does not know; and
- your knowledge of the reader's position on the issues.

Where to Place the Background and Considerations

In some cases, it will be a judgement call in deciding whether background and considerations are placed in the letter or in the enclosed briefing note.

If several sets of Qs & As are provided – i.e., one briefing note for each of several issues – it is probably best to put the background and considerations in the briefing notes along with the Qs & As.

If, however, the background and considerations apply equally to all the sets of Qs & As, you will probably want to either:

– place them in the letter (if there is room); or
– place them in a briefing note of their own that covers all the sets of Qs & As.

Approach

Considerations can be used to provide a general approach that your reader is advised to take in making remarks.

Conclusion

As a rule, briefing notes that provide talking points do not end with a conclusion. The Qs & As themselves represent the conclusion.

Subdividing Qs & As

Sometimes you might find that the Qs & As are becoming lengthy or that you are using many sub-headings and sub-sub-headings. This is a sign that you may need to split the Qs & As into more than one briefing note, each dealing with a different subject.

Contact: John Aspen, (613) 990-0000
Industry Branch, Economic Advancement Canada