

Enclosure 2.

BRIEFING NOTE FOR THE HONOURABLE JOHN SMITH, MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Discussion of Non-Tariff Trade Barriers: Meeting With the Canadian Association of Industrial Exporters (CAIE) Thursday, April 18, 2004

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: “The agenda for your meeting with CAIE includes a 20-minute discussion of non-tariff trade barriers. At issue is what steps can be taken in response to barriers that are found to exist in countries of the European Union.”

TALKING POINTS

Sub-Heading 1

- Talking points should be in bullet format.
- Leave a blank line between each point.

[Place notes to the reader in italics with square brackets. Such notes could include cautions, explanatory notes or guidance on pronunciation of names.]

- Keep the text brief.
- You may need to get a sign-off from your communications branch if the talking points are for the reader to use with the public or the news media.

Sub-Heading 2

- Each point should have no more than two or three brief sentences.
- Use active, not passive language.

Sub-Heading 3

- Use simple language, and avoid jargon unless you are sure the listener will understand it.
- Use emotionally neutral language.

RESPONSIVE TALKING POINTS

- Sometimes talking points are needed to anticipate issues that the reader does not plan to raise, but that other parties may raise. Such talking points are called “responsive talking points”. They are similar to Qs & As.

BACKGROUND

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 talking points are a reasonable response to the issues at stake. This entails providing options, pros and cons, analysis, arguments and key policy priorities as needed, given:

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

Conclusion

Talking points do not provide a formal conclusion, as a rule. The talking points themselves represent the conclusion.

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 talking points 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 talking points.

If, however, the background and considerations apply equally to all the sets of talking points, 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 talking points.

Subdividing Talking Points

If you find that the talking points are becoming lengthy or that you are using many subheadings and sub-subheadings, this is a sign that you may need to split the talking points into more than one briefing note.

Approach

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

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