

- 30 000 Canadian companies visiting overseas posts; and
- 330 000 inquiries from Canadian and local companies being received by overseas posts.
- **Canada's International Market Access Priorities Report**, due for release in late March 1997, will outline priorities for improving access for Canadian goods, services and investment into key markets through multilateral, regional and bilateral initiatives over the coming year. The markets covered in the report account for over 95 per cent of Canadian exports in 1996.

The Role of Trade Policy

An ambitious trade policy agenda goes hand-in-hand with the Government's international business development activities to ensure that Canadian business has competitive access to world markets. Efforts to facilitate and promote trade and Canada's trade policy agenda are complementary.

Through trade policy initiatives, Canada seeks to promote ongoing improvement in the quality, precision and scope of international rules governing trade and investment. Current priorities include:

- effectively managing our trade relations with the United States and Mexico under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA);
- promoting the development of a rules-based multilateral system through the World Trade Organization (WTO); and
- supporting complementary regional initiatives, such as the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum, an action plan for the European Union, and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

At the same time, recent Canadian trade policy initiatives are bearing fruit.

- The Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement, which entered into force January 1, 1997, and the Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement, scheduled to enter into force June 2, 1997, are being implemented to ensure that Canadian exporters can take maximum advantage of new market opportunities.
- The first Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in Singapore in December 1996 brought together Ministers from 128 member countries and laid a firm foundation for a stronger trading system, including preparations for further