

## Introduction

### *A crucial time for Canada*

Over the past five years, the government has introduced forward-looking policies to help Canadians compete in a global economy that is changing faster and becoming more competitive than ever before. Our jobs, our standard of living and our way of life depend on how well we respond to major technological and economic changes in the world. Nowhere is this more important than in international trade, which accounts for three million Canadian jobs and one-third of all that we produce.

International trade has been at the heart of the government's priorities since 1984. One sign that it continues to be so is the new name given to the department — External Affairs and International Trade Canada.

External Affairs and International Trade Canada is playing a pivotal role in securing continued prosperity for Canadians from coast to coast. Last year, its programs and services generated over \$5 billion worth of business for Canadians. The department is also managing the implementation of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, which has not only made trade with the United States more open and secure, but has created great opportunities for Canadian businesses right across the country. The department is ensuring that Canada plays a leading role in the multilateral trade negotiations in Geneva, which are crucial to Canada's future as a trading

nation. In addition, External Affairs and International Trade Canada is implementing an ambitious trade-development strategy which focuses on the United States, European Community and Asia-Pacific markets.

Though it is too soon to attempt a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, it is important to report to Canadians on its implementation, as well as on other major developments related to international trade. We have published this brochure to inform Canadians in a concise and straightforward way about Canada's performance in international trade. This brochure also explains how the government is helping Canadians to compete for markets in a world that is becoming increasingly competitive as we approach the twenty-first century.

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