

BACKGROUND

The International Trade Advisory System

The Policy

The Government is committed to rebuilding the bridges of dialogue and consultation between Ottawa and the rest of Canada. It is looking for collective, and not unilateral effort. It perceives this to be the key to economic renewal and is determined to act on this belief.

Since our economy is heavily dependent on exports, one of the main topics for discussion in this dialogue is international trade.

The Means

The International Trade Advisory System provides a special framework for consultations between government and the private sector. It consists of (a) the International Trade Advisory Committee (ITAC), composed of approximately 40 members, and (b) the Sectoral Advisory Groups on International Trade (SAGIT), which are 15 groups representing sectoral interests. The two structures together form the principal channel by which the government can obtain advice from the private sector and the private sector can talk directly to government on international trade issues.

The ITAC, set up in January 1986, meets four times a year. The SAGIT announced in February 1986, will meet at least quarterly. In announcing the chairpersons of the 15 SAGIT, the Honourable James Kelleher, Minister for International Trade, has put in place this new consultative system.

Members of ITAC, and SAGIT chairpersons, were appointed by the government in consultation with the private sector. The Minister will appoint committee members in consultation with the appropriate chairperson. Both the ITAC and the SAGIT are responsible for setting their own agendas as well as responding to issues on which the Minister seeks advice. All members serve without remuneration.

Members of ITAC serve in their individual capacities but bring to the advisory role their background and expertise from various regions and sectors of Canadian society. ITAC members include persons from business, labour, consumer, cultural, and research groups as well as the academic community. ITAC deals with broad national issues related to international trade access and marketing matters.