

March 1999 Summary Report. The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry also concluded its own consultations and made its report in August 1999. SCFAIT's report contained some 45 recommendations, to which the Government responded in a report tabled in Parliament on November 15, 1999. This response outlined the trade policy objectives and priorities that will guide the Government as it seeks expanded and more certain access to global markets for Canadian goods and services. Canada's position will continue to be refined as the Government continues its active program of public consultations.

Although most WTO Members expected the launch of broad-based trade negotiations at the Third WTO Ministerial Conference, agreement was not reached in Seattle. This delay highlighted the need to rekindle support for further trade and investment liberalization and multilateral rule-making, with the objective being the eventual expansion of the WTO negotiating agenda. Another consequence of this delay has been a renewed interest, in some countries, in regional and bilateral trade liberalization initiatives. While developments in this area will be watched closely, progress is expected to be modest. We also may see a rise in trade disputes between Members due to the lapsing of the provisions of certain agreements and because Seattle did not launch the negotiations that were expected to resolve some existing differences between Members. We will be working closely with our trading partners to discourage any rise in disputes among members and to develop support and momentum for expanded negotiations.

The key elements in rebuilding this support will be achieving progress on the ongoing work of the WTO (including the implementation of existing agreements in an effective and somewhat flexible manner, and continued efforts to facilitate trade); addressing the concerns of developing countries through improved market access for least developed countries (LDCs) and expanded capacity building (including trade-related technical assistance and a re-invigorated Integrated Framework); and improvements to the WTO itself, in the form of improved transparency and agreement on revisions to the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU). Of particular importance will be achieving real progress on establishing the modalities for the Uruguay Round-mandated negotiations on agriculture and services, which are now underway.

Minister for International Trade Pierre Pettigrew is seeking the support of Canada's trading partners for his medium-term objective of strengthening the world trading system and global markets — using trade liberalization and rule-making as a means to assist sustainable development and alleviate poverty. These efforts would be pursued in the context of improving governance, economic and social infrastructure and domestic policy coherence, as well as in the context of improved international policy and institutional coherence among economic, development and social organizations. One of the important elements of this work will be improving the management and decision-making structure of the WTO.

IMPROVING ACCESS FOR TRADE IN GOODS

Information Technology Agreement

The WTO Information Technology Agreement (ITA), signed in December 1996 at the Singapore WTO Ministerial Conference, required participants to eliminate customs duties and other duties and charges on a wide range of IT products by 2000. Canada and 47 other countries — which together produce over 93 percent of world trade in this sector — have joined the ITA, mandating further efforts to expand the product coverage, a process known as "ITA II". In November 1998, the Chair of the ITA Committee proposed a new product list based on Members' proposals. The list covers a wide range of products, including: machinery and equipment for manufacturing printed circuit boards; some consumer electronics; selected radar and navigational aid equipment; and certain inputs for IT manufacturing. Canada has actively supported this initiative and will continue to support efforts to reach a consensus on expanding the product coverage.

The ITA also provides for the examination of non-tariff measures. The committee continues to work on standards and conformity assessment procedures, and Canada continues to promote the examination of import licensing policies and procedures.