

## THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES SAGIT IN THE TRADE POLICY CONSULTATION PROCESS

Canada has been involved over the past few years in important multi-lateral trade negotiations. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are two examples.

The Canadian government sought ways to strengthen the advisory relationship between itself and the private sector and the "SAGIT" process was born. The SAGITs are Sector Advisory Groups on International Trade which represent fifteen major sectors of the Canadian economy. One of these sectors is the cultural industries.

*We are pleased to announce the new management team in the International Cultural Relations Bureau. The Bureau now comprises three divisions: the Arts and Letters Division, under the direction of Gerry Redmond, the Academic Relations Division, under the direction of Brian Long, and the recently created Division in charge of the Promotion of Cultural Industries and Educational Goods and Services, under the direction of Pierre Pichette. The Director-General of the International Cultural Relations Bureau is Robin Higham, and the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for Culture is Marie Bernard-Meunier.*

Members of the SAGITs are appointed by the Minister for International Trade to ensure that the

government has the benefit of private sector advice in its deliberations on international trade policy and international business development issues.

Members of the cultural industries are normally drawn from three industry subsectors: music and sound-recording, publishing, and film/video. In order to ensure a direct link between industry and the government the chair of the SAGIT reports directly to the Minister.

In order to underline the importance of the advisory process between industry and government, the Chairperson of the SAGIT has direct and confidential access to the Minister.

In addition to the SAGIT there is the International Trade Advisory Committee (ITAC) on which the cultural industries SAGIT Chairperson has a seat. The ITAC comprises approximately thirty five members from the Canadian business, labour, consumer, cultural, and academic communities. The ITAC has struck three Task Forces on Trade Policy, International Business development, and Trade and the Environment.

The SAGIT process provides a vital and constructive private/public partnership. The importance of the Cultural Industries SAGIT reflects the government's determination to ensure that this sector continues to develop as a fundamental and key growth area of Canada's economy.

*Métis artist Edward Poitras of Regina was selected as Canada's official representative to the 46th Venice Biennial for the visual arts, held between June 10 and October 15, 1995. Canada's participation was well-received, and generated favourable reviews in visual arts circles and in the Canadian press.*

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