

GATS Consultation Process

Domestic consultations are key to enhancing good governance and transparency and to promoting a democratic approach to trade policy development. Canada's trade policy encompasses interests beyond those of the business world, and all citizens can have a say in determining this policy.

Intensive and ongoing consultations on the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) remain an important part of the Canadian government's overall commitment to ensuring that Canada's position on GATS continues to reflect the interests of all Canadians. The government has been seeking, and will continue to seek, the views of Canadians in developing trade policies and positions, using a broad range of consultative mechanisms. These mechanisms include the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (SCFAIT) process, as well as the sectoral advisory groups on international trade (SAGITs). The government

is also consulting with municipal governments. Equally important, all interested Canadians are invited to provide their comments and views on the issues via the GATS 2000 Web site (services2000.ic.gc.ca).

The government has been working closely with provincial and territorial governments, which have jurisdiction in many areas of services trade, to develop our initial negotiating position. For example, in 2002, the government engaged in a new cycle of cross-sectoral consultations across the country. The consultations covered all services-related bilateral and multilateral negotiations currently under way (GATS, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, Central America Four, Canada-Singapore and the Caribbean Community and Common Market). The government coordinated with the provinces and territories to hear not only from provincial officials but also from local business groups and local non-governmental

organizations regarding the Canadian negotiating position. In addition to opening up a mutually educational dialogue between government officials and stakeholders, the consultations provided a regional dimension and balance to Canadians' input concerning the negotiations.

In the context of the guidelines and procedures reaffirmed at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha in November 2001, the government will continue to consult, inform and engage citizens as the negotiations progress, thus ensuring that Canada's position on GATS continues to reflect the interests of all Canadians.

The government welcomes the views of interested Canadians. To provide your comments, please visit the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Web site (www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac) or the Government of Canada Web site for the GATS negotiations (services2000.ic.gc.ca).

liberalization that they seek from their partners) by no later than June 30, 2002, and their initial offers (i.e. the liberalization commitments that they are willing to offer their partners) by no later than March 30, 2003.

Canada presented its initial requests to other WTO members as per the agreed deadline. A description of the initial market access requests that Canada made of other countries is available on-line (www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/service-e.asp and services2000.ic.gc.ca). This information was compiled following detailed consultations with Canadian stakeholders and in close cooperation with the

provinces and territories. In the market access phase of negotiations, WTO member countries have been meeting bilaterally to make initial market access requests of one another in the 12 broad service sectors covered by GATS. These bilateral meetings enable countries to gain a clear idea of the liberalization requests of their trading partners. Requests aim to remove specific trade barriers in countries of export interest.

The initial offers will take into account the basic negotiating parameters that each country has set for itself, as well as the various bilateral requests it has received from other members. For example, in