



**2. Getting the
International
Rules Right:
The World
Trade
Organization**

As a medium-sized, trade dependent economy, Canada's current and future prosperity depends on open world markets, a stable trading environment, and a means to settle trade disputes based on rules rather than political or economic might. Canada's membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) helps us to achieve these objectives. The 141 member countries of the WTO oversee the administration and functioning of multilateral trade agreements and help to maintain the rules governing world trade. The WTO remains the cornerstone of Canadian trade policy and the foundation for Canada's relations with its trading partners and for Canada's bilateral and regional agreements and initiatives.

Canada is also active in other multilateral forums that influence and guide the international trade policy agenda. We participate actively in the meetings of the G-7/G-8 major economies; the Quadrilateral (United States, European Union, Japan and Canada) Trade Ministers; the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations; the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum; and United Nations (UN) economic institutions and agencies. Our participation in these bodies and in informal trade ministerial meetings helps us to shape consensus on trade issues of importance to Canada.

In Canada, the government maintains an extensive program of outreach and consultations with the provinces and territories, the business sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), other interest groups, and the public. The government also maintains a Web site (www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac) that provides information on trade policy issues and invites public comments on negotiating priorities and objectives.

Looking Ahead

The launch of expanded balanced and sufficiently broad-based trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) is key to ensuring a healthy, open and forward-looking global trading system that meets the needs of all. While many countries, including Canada, have called for new trade talks to begin by the end of 2001, agreement has not yet been reached on either the timing for a launch or the scope of a future negotiating agenda.