

As an example of their work, the Council on Goods oversees the functioning of the GATT and 12 other agreements related to trade in goods, including agreements on anti-dumping, subsidies and countervailing measures, trade-related investment measures, agriculture and textiles.

The WTO secretariat is headed by Renato Ruggiero. Director General Ruggiero is a former Italian trade minister and private sector executive. While independent as an institution, the secretariat plays a key role in providing member countries with support and technical assistance.

Strengthening the Rules-Based System: Benefits for Canada

The WTO brings distinct benefits to Canada and other trading nations. It is designed to strengthen and improve the multilateral trading system by monitoring the trade regimes of its members and through its procedures for enhanced notification, consultation and dispute settlement. This will also help reduce the use of unilateral trade actions in response to perceived unfair trade actions.

The dispute settlement process aims to prevent a single member from blocking adoption of panel reports or, on appeal, of the Appellate Body. The key to this is a rule which ensures a report is adopted unless all members agree not to adopt it.

The WTO contributes to a further strengthening of the rule of law governing world trade and reduces the ability of the most powerful economies to interfere with the markets of smaller economies. This is important for Canada, which depends heavily on trade.

The Final Act of the Uruguay Round and the WTO agreement provide that negotiations must be conducted under the umbrella of the WTO on issues such as financial services, basic telecommunications, maritime transport and government procurement.

In July 1995, an interim agreement was reached which liberalized trade in financial services, improving Canada's access to a number of financial markets. The United States chose not to participate fully by not making most-favoured-nation commitments for new financial services or activities. Under the most-favoured-nation principle, concessions granted by one country to another have to be granted to all. Canada looks forward to re-engaging in negotiations before the current agreement expires in 1997.

Negotiators on basic telecommunications services broke off discussions at the end of April, agreeing to freeze current offers and to delay conclusion of negotiations until February 15, 1997. Negotiations continue on maritime transport and government procurement.