

- the Trade Commissioner Service strengthen its ability to respond to rapid changes in the international environment, notably by providing more training to officers in priority areas, by increasing the number of short-term executive exchanges with the private sector and International Financial Institutions, and by lengthening the duration of postings.

Based on the Committee's calculations, the implementation of the report's 20 recommendations would result in substantial savings within the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and for the government as a whole.

Overall, the Committee's message is clear: sharpen the focus of programs, streamline operations, and better co-ordinate activities among federal and provincial departments and agencies.

The consultative process that produced the IBDR reflects the government's ongoing commitment to client-driven service. I thank the Committee members for their time and effort in preparing a timely and challenging report. These recommendations will be looked at closely, together with recommendations of the current Foreign Policy Review.

I shall put into place concrete measures to prepare the Trade Commissioner Service for the next century. Given the severe fiscal constraints in government, some difficult choices will have to be made. However, I would like to emphasize that the resource cuts outlined in the report are secondary to the goal of improving our effectiveness in delivering our programs and in being more responsive to private-sector needs.

I urge you to continue your discussions this afternoon on the important questions that are facing the future of the Trade Commissioner Service. Your views are important to me.

It is appropriate that we consider such important questions during the 100th anniversary of the Service. But we cannot and should not, serve business needs in isolation. This is and must remain an interactive process.

We are making a conscious effort to consult extensively with our clients. But we need to hear from you more often. I invite you to think about some of the initiatives we are undertaking and about the recommendations in the International Business Development Review, and give us your views.

Let us know also if our efforts are paying off. And, let us know when things are going well. The women and men of the Trade Commissioner Service who serve Canadian companies around the world are dedicated professionals who deserve our recognition.