

The GATS Consultation Process

Intensive and ongoing consultations on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) remain an important part of the Government's overall commitment to seek the views of Canadians in developing trade policies and positions, using a broad range of consultative mechanisms involving the SCFAIT process, as well as the Sectoral Advisory Groups on International Trade (SAGITs). We are also working closely with the provinces and territories in developing Canada's negotiating position and are consulting with municipal governments. Equally important, all interested Canadians were invited to provide their comments and views on the issues, via the GATS 2000 Web site (on-line consultations) and through a notice placed in the *Canada Gazette*, which solicited responses by e-mail, letter or fax.

To address issues of interest to diverse audiences, the Government

also conducted a series of multi-stakeholder roundtable sessions on the GATS in partnership with the governments of 10 provinces and two of the three territories. These sessions took place in 12 cities across Canada from June to October 2000. More than 1000 organizations and groups were invited; of these, 274 sent delegates. In total, 335 individuals participated in the sessions, representing business and labour associations, non-governmental and public interest groups, consumers, producers, regulators, academics and the service industry. In addition to opening up a mutually educational dialogue between government officials and stakeholders, the sessions provided a regional dimension and balance to Canadians' input concerning the GATS.

In the context of the guidelines and procedures reaffirmed at the WTO Doha Ministerial Conference in November 2001,

the Government will continue to consult, inform and engage citizens as the negotiations progress, thus ensuring that Canada's position on the GATS continues to reflect the interests of all Canadians. In 2002, it will engage in a new cycle of cross-sectoral consultations across the country. These consultations will include all services-related bilateral and multilateral negotiations currently under way (the FTAA, the GATS, Central America Four, CARICOM and Canada-Singapore).

The Government of Canada 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/tma-nac) or the Government of Canada Web site for the GATS negotiations (services2000.ic.gc.ca).

market access, national treatment and the application of pro-competitive regulatory principles. Eighty-eight countries, accounting for more than 90% of world-wide telecommunications revenues, have made such commitments.

There is a good basis for further liberalization of the telecommunications services market in negotiations under the GATS, as well as in other bilateral and multilateral fora. Canada's position in all such negotiations is that market liberalization should be encouraged, based on the principle that all countries benefit from an expansion of the international market for telecommunications services. Such liberalization would benefit not only services exporters, but also exporters of telecommunications goods and computer-related goods and services. Moreover, because telecommuni-

cations is the backbone of the Internet, liberalization would facilitate the development of e-commerce. In particular, the ability of small and medium-sized enterprises to reach new markets through e-commerce depends on the economical and widespread availability of services such as the Internet.

Professional Services

In recent years, Canadian professional services providers (e.g. engineers, accountants, architects, legal consultants and geologists) have increasingly exported their expertise abroad. Canadian engineering consulting firms rank among the leaders in total international billings. Canadian law firms are well placed to take advantage of business opportunities worldwide, as Canada functions within the two main law regimes (common law and civil