

5. Looking to Parliament. The Commons has undertaken an unprecedented foreign-policy workload since 1993. But the relationship of MPs to NGOs and other participants in DFAIT's public consultation efforts remains ambiguous and weak. NGO activists, departmental officials and a former MP all confirmed that Parliament's role in the transformation of policy-making has yet to emerge with any clarity. NGOs tend to mention the Commons as an afterthought, if at all.

6. Demonstrating commitment at the topmost levels of the department. When ministers and senior officials have exhibited by their actions a determination to consult Canadians, it is noticed—but partly because it seems so rare. Notwithstanding the good intentions and considerable patience of ministers, there is a widespread disbelief among interested publics that the department is committed to the value of engaging Canadians—except as a tactic of public relations or inter-departmental bargaining. It is equally widely held that business interests receive a kind of hospitality in the Pearson Building that other interests do not. Responsibility for correcting these perceptions, for fulfilling the Government's pledge to "an open foreign policy process," begins at the top.

7. Exploiting the new technologies. It is fair to say the department's use of the Internet in the work of public consultation remains experimental and tentative. But it also deserves saying that in the APEC and Santiago cases the Internet was used to distribute information fast and cheaply. More of this can be tried, with a stronger emphasis on multiple flows of communications in and out of DFAIT and among interested Canadians. This is one technique of overcoming constraints of cost. It also invites easy involvement of groups outside Central Canada, who often feel neglected in the business-as-usual of interest-group politics in Ottawa.