

Introduction

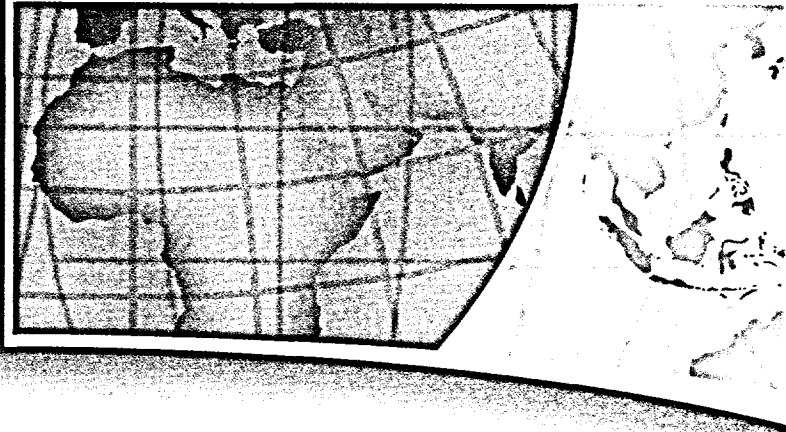
Canada's prosperity is inextricably linked to international trade. Open markets, combined with a stable and transparent trading environment, are at the core of our growth and prosperity. However, trading relationships, like any other intense interaction, sometimes result in disputes. As a medium-sized economy, Canada needs an effective, rules-based multilateral system so that trade disputes can be settled based on commonly agreed-upon rules, rather than by political or economic might. Canada's membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) helps us manage our trade relations and achieve our objectives for further economic growth.

The WTO system of agreements is the cornerstone of the multilateral trading system. It is the foundation of Canadian trade policy and governs our trade relations with the European Union, Japan, other industrialized countries and a host of emerging markets worldwide. It also underpins much of our trade with the United States. The WTO provides a forum for negotiating trade rights and responsibilities, negotiating market access, monitoring the implementation of obligations and commitments under various agreements, reviewing members' trade policies and practices, and settling disputes between members that arise out of differing interpretations of the rules. The WTO is working with other international organizations in coordinating and sharing information on finance, environment and development issues.

Building a Trading System That Benefits All: The New Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations

In November 2001, 142 trade ministers met at the fourth WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar, and launched a new round of multilateral trade negotiations—the Doha Development Agenda. Ministers also welcomed the accessions of China and Chinese Taipei to the WTO. As a result of the launch at Doha, ongoing WTO negotiations on agriculture and services were joined by negotiations on market access for non-agricultural goods, anti-dumping and subsidy/ countervailing duty disciplines, WTO dispute settlement, a multilateral notification and registration system for wines and spirits, and certain aspects of trade and the environment. Substantive discussions

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in all negotiating areas are well under way. Ministers agreed in Doha to target January 1, 2005, for completion of this round of negotiations.

Also at Doha, focused work programs were initiated in four areas known as the Singapore issues (i.e., investment, competition policy, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation), with a decision to negotiate to be taken at the fifth Ministerial Conference in 2003. Decisions taken in Doha also included commitments to new work program areas such as trade, debt and finance, trade and technology transfer, electronic commerce, trade and environment, and trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) and public health.

As mandated by the separate declaration issued in Doha on TRIPS and public health, ministers have been actively involved in addressing the dual objectives of providing poorer countries with access to the medicines they need to respond to grave public health crises (such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and other epidemics), and ensuring that new and better medicines can be created by protecting the intellectual property of those who undertake research and development.