

regulators with the opportunity to meet on a regular basis with their European counterparts, which promotes better understanding of each other's systems.

In addition, three years ago Health Canada established a position in Brussels in response to EU interest in the Canadian system and to promote Canadian public health policy — both health protection and health promotion — with the EU. A joint work program is being developed as part of an overall Canada-EU health dialogue, which is expected to be finalized this fall. Furthermore, in September 2001, a Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) officer began work assignments in the Canadian mission to the EU in Brussels. The goals of this initiative are to increase CFIA cooperation with the European Commission at the technical level, to strengthen contacts, and to advance some of the complex issues faced by the CFIA and the European Commission's Health and Consumer Protection Director (SANCO).

With respect to standards, Canada and Europe are active players in the international standards development bodies such as the International Organization for Standardization and the International Electrotechnical Commission. Canada has some 3000 volunteers participating in over 400 international technical committees, subcommittees and working groups. These volunteers disseminate information about the Canadian system internationally, including to their European counterparts, which leads to better understanding of and potential support for Canadian approaches.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Regulatory Policy Review provides an additional forum for sharing Canada's regulatory experience with European decision makers. This review, which is currently underway, is intended to highlight regulatory best practices.

RECOMMENDATION 23:

That Canada and the EU seek common understanding on the meaning of the precautionary approach and the manner in which it is to be applied to regulatory practices. Ultimately, such an understanding should be arrived at within a multilateral setting.

The Government is engaging the European Commission in a process designed to promote a better understanding of our respective approaches to precaution within regulatory systems. The Government has been closely following the discussion within the European Union of the "precautionary approach" or "principle," particularly in light of mounting public pressures in Europe after a number of food safety crises and regulatory failures. In July 2000, Canada submitted a series of questions to the European Commission for clarification of their initial "Communication on the Precautionary Principle," to which the Commission responded in May 2001. In parallel,