

Access North America has just been launched by the Canadian Government. It is an innovative trade and investment development program designed to provide companies with tools to further penetrate the Mexican market. It supports Canadian companies seeking to capitalize on opportunities obtained through the negotiation of the NAFTA. The Government of Canada is investing \$27 million over a four-year period in support of these efforts, which include the creation of the first ever Canadian Business Centre in Mexico.

## ii) Political

Whatever happens on the NAFTA, there will be an intense period of bilateral diplomatic activity in 1994.

Since 1990, the bilateral relationship has grown very rapidly: of the 36 existing agreements with Mexico, 26 have been signed since 1990. At the last annual Joint Ministerial Commission (held last February), nine Canadian and nine Mexican ministers participated.

The substantive bilateral political dialogue has already expanded to the point where sectoral ministers across the Cabinet are in regular contact with Mexican counterparts.

Because of the double transition (1993 elections in Canada and 1994 presidential election in Mexico), and the number of bilateral issues to be dealt with, Canadian and Mexican ministers will need to meet to ensure that the relationship stays on track.

Canada is helping Mexico to achieve membership in such multilateral organizations as the OECD and APEC, and Mexico provides Canada with a window into regional organizations such as the Rio Group. The Rio Group is an informal association of key Latin and South American countries which is used as a consultative mechanism on an ad hoc basis.

Canada regularly raises human rights concerns with Mexican ministers.

Mexico often disagrees with Canadian initiatives to expand the role of multilateral organizations in the promotion of good governance, arguing that this violates standards of sovereignty.