

THE NORTH AMERICAN AGREEMENTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND LABOUR CO-OPERATION

Negotiated and implemented in parallel to the NAFTA, the North American Agreements on Environmental and Labour Co-operation were designed to facilitate greater co-operation between the partner countries in those areas and to promote the effective enforcement of each country's laws and regulations.

Labour

The Commission for Labour Co-operation (CEC) was created in 1994 by the North American Agreement on Labour Co-operation (NAALC) to promote co-operation on labour matters between NAFTA members and to promote the effective enforcement of domestic labour law. The Commission consists of a Council of Ministers (comprising the labour ministers from each country) and a Secretariat, located in Dallas, Texas. The Secretariat provides administrative, technical and operational support to the Council and is charged with the implementation of an annual work program. National Administrative Offices (NAOs), located in the departments responsible for labour in each of the three countries, serve as domestic implementation points for the Agreement.

Regarding the NAALC, the Canadian Intergovernmental Agreement provides a

mechanism for provincial participation and has now been signed by Alberta, Quebec and Manitoba. This agreement gives the provinces an important role in developing and managing Canada's involvement in the NAALC. With the combined participation of these provinces and the federal government, the NAALC now covers more than 40 percent of the Canadian workforce.

As of June 1997, a total of seven public communications have been received under the NAALC, all of which deal with freedom of association. Six of the submissions have been directed at Mexico (one was withdrawn) and one at the United States. Canada has not been the subject of any submissions.

In 1996, the Commission issued a preliminary report profiling North American labour markets. It also released an initial report on labour law in Canada, Mexico and the United States in the area of industrial relations (freedom of association and right to organize, right to bargain collectively and right to strike). At the request of the Council, the Secretariat completed a study on the effects of sudden plant closures on freedom of association and the right to organize. In February 1997, the Secretariat hosted the first North American Seminar on Incomes and Productivity with business, labour and academic participation.