

A POLICY REVIEW

An environmental "review" of a policy differs from an environmental "assessment" of a project. A policy such as a free trade agreement cannot be subjected to the same type of quantitative analyses associated with the assessment of a project such as construction of a dam, a mine or a factory. In fact, the potential environmental impacts of certain policies can be neither appraised nor fully anticipated in advance. The environmental effects of the NAFTA will depend on the trade action and investment decisions taken as a result of the Agreement.

The process of reviewing policies for their environmental implications is in its infancy. In fact Canada is one of only a few countries that has such a requirement. Consequently, unlike projects, there are no commonly accepted methods for conducting such a review. However, the review can be used to examine, in a qualitative way, the potential environmental impact of the policy, and to provide a framework for addressing future environmental concerns.

PROCEDURES

The review focused on the environmental implications for Canada alone. Each of the NAFTA countries is responsible for its own environment and thus for making its own review. The environments of the U.S. and Mexico were considered only in relation to transboundary issues for Canada, such as industry migration.

CONSULTATIONS

Federal and provincial ministers and officials met regularly to discuss the status of the NAFTA negotiations, including the environmental content of the discussions. The provinces provided valuable input into the development of the environmental provisions of the NAFTA.

Representatives of industry, environmental organizations, labour and academia were consulted through the government advisory groups: the International Trade Advisory Committee and the 15 Sectoral Advisory Groups on International Trade. The consultations ensured that the environment was considered in all aspects of the NAFTA negotiations.

Other environmental organizations expressed their views and recommendations through workshops and discussions with government representatives and NAFTA negotiators. The Environmental Review Committee considered submissions on NAFTA and the environment from environmental and public policy groups in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Committee members had open and continuous contact with the negotiators during all phases of the negotiations.