

Ministerial Oversight

Ministerial oversight of the NAFTA negotiations has been strong and ongoing. The formal negotiations were launched when Trade Ministers from the three countries met in Toronto on June 12, 1991. The key elements of the Toronto Ministerial Meeting, attended by Mexico's Commerce and Industrial Development Minister, Dr. Jaime Serra Puche, United States Trade Representative Carla Hills, and International Trade Minister Michael Wilson, were:

- an opportunity to determine the procedural and substantive issues necessary to ensure the success of the first phase of the negotiations;
- agreement that the objective of the negotiations should be to achieve a comprehensive agreement, broad in scope, that would confer real benefits to its participants; and
- a consensus on the necessity to maintain close and continuing political "oversight" of the negotiations.

The second Ministerial Meeting was hosted by the United States on August 18-20, 1991 in Seattle, Washington. Between the Toronto and Seattle meetings, there were two meetings of Chief Negotiators (Washington, July 8-9, and Mexico City, August 6-7). Meetings of Chief Negotiators are primarily held in order to take stock of the progress in individual negotiating groups and to develop advice for their respective Ministers. At the Seattle Meeting, Ministers agreed that:

- they were generally pleased with the progress in the individual negotiating groups;
- each country should be in a position to exchange their initial tariff elimination proposals by mid-September 1991;
- there was a need for a comprehensive approach to deal with the range of market restrictions existing in the automotive sector; and
- they were satisfied with the parallel activities identified and under development in the fields of labour conditions and the environment.