
Organization will continue to be the cornerstone of Canada's trade policy, as well as the foundation for Canada's bilateral and regional agreements and initiatives.

Canada will continue to play an active leadership role in the formation of what will be the world's largest free trade area. The Free Trade Area of the Americas will improve access for Canadian exports to a hemispheric market of more than 800 million people and will build upon Canada's free trade agreements with the United States, Mexico, Chile and Costa Rica.

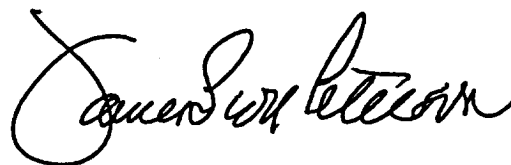
The year 2004 will also be a busy one on other trade policy fronts. With the setback in multilateral negotiations, many of our trading partners are increasing the pace of bilateral negotiations. Canadian negotiators are currently in the midst of negotiations with several countries on agreements to open markets for Canadian business and to complement broader, multilateral efforts. The government will continue its efforts to open key markets. Canada and the European Union, for example, recently agreed on a framework for a new trade and investment enhancement agreement to further stimulate our important commercial relationship. Negotiations are expected to begin this year.

The Government of Canada is dedicated to strengthening access to emerging markets and to realigning business development efforts to take advantage of the opportunities presented by these markets. Accordingly, Gar Knutson, Minister of State (New and Emerging Markets), has been mandated to support Canada's economic goals through enhanced engagement with expanding markets.

Many of the developing country markets, which currently offer significant potential for Canadian exporters, services providers and investors, will emerge as key trade and investment partners of the future. Trade-related technical assistance, capacity building, and greater institutional and policy coherence among international organizations will facilitate the full participation of developing countries in the global economy. Canada will continue to support growth and contribute to the strengthening of peace, stability and good governance in these countries.

The Government of Canada is committed to continuing to consult regularly with all stakeholders: the provinces and territories, non-governmental organizations, the business sector, municipalities and the Canadian public. This dialogue is an invaluable tool used by the government as a basis for its actions and intentions on a wide range of issues.

I would encourage interested parties to consult the trade negotiations and agreements Web site for the most up-to-date information on Canada's trade policy agenda. I invite you to register your views using the Department of International Trade Web site (www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/trade/menu-en.asp) or the aforementioned trade negotiations and agreements Web site (www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/menu-en.asp). Your views will contribute to informing and guiding the government so that together we can develop international trade and investment policies that help build Canada's 21st century economy on strong social foundations and ensure our continued prosperity.



The Honourable James Scott Peterson, P.C., M.P.