

Government Response

The Government expresses its appreciation to the Committee for its ongoing contributions to public consultations on Canada's international trade priorities and objectives. The Committee's report on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) provides valuable direction and guidance for the Government as it participates in negotiations to create the world's largest free trade area.

The FTAA represents an historic opportunity to unite the 34 democratic countries of the hemisphere in a comprehensive free trade area that promotes and stimulates economic integration and development. The FTAA's origins date back to the first Summit of the Americas in Miami in December 1994. The formal negotiations were launched by Leaders at the second Summit of the Americas in Santiago in April 1998 with a commitment to conclude an agreement by 2005. The Summit process engages the member countries in an integrative and cooperative forum to promote economic, social and political development. More specifically, the Summit agenda focuses on: economic integration and free trade; the elimination of poverty and discrimination; democratic development; and education. The FTAA is a central element to the promotion of economic integration and free trade, but the Government strongly believes that the increased economic growth, integration and development that will be realized under a free trade agreement will reinforce the other Summit objectives. The Government supports the Summit of the Americas process as a means by which Canadian ideals and values can be furthered throughout the Americas. As a reflection of this deeply-held commitment, the Government is hosting the third Summit of the Americas, in Québec City, in April 2001.

Canada has long been an advocate of the benefits of international economic integration and has pursued the objective of economic growth through free trade within the international arena for over 50 years. As an open, mid-sized economy, Canada depends on free trade to promote economic growth, create jobs and sustain our high standards of living. Over 40% of goods and services produced in Canada are exported and one in three new jobs depends on international trade. In addition, our integration in the global economy

