

As important as it is to Canada, trade is critical to developing countries. With other WTO members, Canada is working to expand the benefits of the multilateral trading system by helping to address developing countries' concerns, and by providing more assistance to improve the capacity of poorer countries to trade.

"We can afford to cushion the blow that sometimes results from international competition; we can help our citizens get back on their feet, get training and find new work," says Minister Pettigrew. "A majority of less-developed countries do not have the capacity to do this. Many are therefore understandably wary about entering into an agreement that could overwhelm their fragile economies. We must not let their fears be realized. Trade liberalization must benefit all economies, particularly the smaller ones."

To improve access for services and industrial goods, Canada wants more open markets. Proposed new rules on the use of trade remedies and subsidies will also give the multilateral trading system greater predictability—a key contributor to Canada's economic success.

To enhance public understanding of the benefits of a multilateral trading system, says the Deputy Minister, Canada is actively promoting transparency at the WTO. Openness is fundamental to how Canada develops and implements its trade policy.

What's true internationally is true domestically: By practising transparency, federal departments and agencies involved in trade discussions and negotiations ensure that they have open and effective channels of communication with each other and with provincial and territorial governments. And with transparency, interested stakeholders can provide input on government policy, the public can keep abreast of the country's trade agenda, and information provided in timely fashion can foster and support

The Doha Development Agenda

The WTO's top decision-making body is the Ministerial Conference, composed chiefly of trade ministers from each member country. It meets at least once every two years. At the November 2001 meeting in Doha, Qatar, the ministers re-affirmed the international community's commitment to opening up trade. In demonstration of that commitment, they launched a new round of negotiations focusing on many of the concerns of developing countries. These are expressed in the Doha Development Agenda, which notably calls for still lower tariffs for the exports on which developing countries depend. And through a declaration on intellectual property and public health, the Doha meeting signalled that the WTO system allows its members to balance social and health objectives with economic goals.

photo: Donald Stampfli AP



Main entrance of the World Trade Organization headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

debate and discussion. The result is government policy that is in the best interest of Canadians, and that has their understanding and consent.

Benefits to Canada and beyond

Canada is a major trading nation; estimates are that one job in four depends on exports. In 2002, Canada's total two-way trade in goods and services was \$891 billion, or \$2.4 billion every day. But while most foreign products enter Canada duty-free or at fairly low tariffs, some of Canada's exports are taxed as much as 67 percent.

Freer trade will benefit Canadian exporters, the vast majority of which are small and medium-sized enterprises. Canadians are world-class producers, and Canadian trade will expand, particularly in the fast-growing services sector. That will lead to increased productivity and competitiveness, and greater access to technology, investment and customers.

"Canada as a whole will benefit as well," says Len Edwards. "Open trade means more and better jobs, higher incomes, greater revenues for social programs and better prices for consumers. And in a fair, rules-based system, all countries—including developing countries—stand to benefit." 🍁