

and ii) to move toward greater cost-recovery from participants. This has, for example, been done by the private sector through the Forum for International Trade Training (FITT), which brings together business, labour, educators and government to develop national training standards, and an accreditation and certification process to assist both Canadian individuals and firms operating or wishing to operate in an international trading environment.<sup>15</sup>

Greater emphasis on the advocacy of Canadian interests as a critical element of the overall international business development strategy will require reinforcement of the skills and knowledge base of trade commissioners in the field. The NAFTA and more especially the World Trade Organization have transformed the international rules of commerce, but translating these new obligations into the business environment will require vigilance and pursuit of Canadian commercial interests. Canadian missions abroad have always lobbied the host government on market access issues, but Canadian overseas representatives need the knowledge of countries are proceeding with implementation of these new agreements. In this task, the representatives will need to be supported from Ottawa, both in obtaining the detailed knowledge of these agreements and in the willingness of Ottawa to support representations about market access issues with host governments.

This emphasis on advocacy will require different approaches by representatives in the field. Instead of tallying contracts won or sales made as a result of business visits or trade missions, the trade commissioner is being asked to spend time and expend good will with contacts in order to understand and document why particular contracts were unsuccessful. Was the lack of commercial success the result of discriminatory government policies in violation of international agreements, or was it as a result of commercial factors? This type of analysis is difficult to undertake, and requires investigative skills on the part of the trade commissioner. It also requires that there be appropriate incentive structures for the analyst to do the qualitative analysis and interviews instead of emphasizing simple quantitative measures such as number of business visitors.

---

<sup>15</sup> As befits a private sector that is increasingly willing to help itself, FITT is being driven by a team formed from organizations that include the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Federation of Labour, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Exporters' Association, the Canadian Importers' Association, the World Trade Centres, the Canadian Professional Logistics Institute, and the Canadian Professional Sales Association. It was launched with the financial support of the Department of Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) and is designed to be self-financing within four years.