

Canada needs to work intensively on the diplomatic and trade fronts with its biggest partner and client.

Comments from provinces and territories urge closer consultation with the federal government on bilateral as well as multilateral trade files and negotiations, especially as these increasingly bear on areas of provincial jurisdiction such as environment, education and health. Some private-sector participants argue that Canada should do more to tackle domestic competitiveness and innovation issues, as well as trade and investment promotion, in order to advance further in North American and global markets.

A Fairer Global Economy

Fair trade, respect for international standards of human rights, and the protection of the natural environment should always govern international trade. ... The objective of foreign policy should always be to raise the standards of our trading partners, rather than lowering Canadian standards to meet theirs.

– Dialogue participant

Many participants argue strongly that just as Canadians' security must be understood as increasingly linked to the security of states and individuals beyond our borders, so too should our prosperity be envisioned within a global perspective on economic well-being. As one submission says:

Canadian foreign policy, particularly trade and aid policy, must systematically address the lack of prosperity of the world's poor. It must address the insecurity caused by poverty. And it must promote values that build global social justice, peace, and respect for the world's ecosystems.

– Dialogue participant

Suggestions concerning international economic reforms urge attention to "fair trade" through more equitable and democratically accountable trade institutions, rules and practices; food security and access

to resources; reforms to the international financial institutions and structural adjustment policies; and financial stabilization and relief of debt burdens of the poorest countries. Canada's initiative to open market access to least-developed country imports is welcomed, though Canadian practices come in for criticism with respect to issues such as arms exports, socially responsible practices of corporations operating abroad (especially in conflict zones), and the application of human rights, labour, and environmental standards to our relations with other countries. Some participants argue for constructive engagement as the most realistic way to make progress, though many others want Canada to be firmer in insisting that our own governments, export agencies and businesses, as well as our partners, adhere to internationally agreed norms.

Views diverge on overall directions for the global economy, with some asserting that a continued course of economic liberalization would boost prosperity in Canada and contribute to global economic growth in a manner compatible with social and environmental needs. A large number disagree, however, wanting assurances that international economic agreements be consistent with human rights, cultural diversity and ecological sustainability, and that they explicitly protect essential public services (notably medicare and education) within Canada. Indeed, some respondents urge that we examine all international economic relationships from the perspective of human rights and democratic development, in recognition of the view that public confidence in the value of globalization will be sustained only if its benefits are fairly shared.

Effective International Assistance and Development Cooperation

As a minimal starting point, Canada should work to achieve United Nations targets known as the Millennium Development Goals, including reducing the proportion of those living in poverty by half by 2015. ... Canada should meet its own foreign aid commitments with targets and time lines,