

In addition to the liberalization element, each proposal will contain components to facilitate trade and encourage economic and technical co-operation. While no agreements are final, discussions are continuing and Canadian officials are actively engaged.

APEC ministers are expected to review the agreements for the nine sectors and evaluate commitments for participation and implementation. They will also examine the feasibility of transferring these initiatives to the World Trade Organization. Any decision to move initiatives beyond the Asia-Pacific region, however, will depend on whether APEC trade ministers assess that there is a critical mass of support for doing so.

Canada's basic objectives with respect to early voluntary sectoral liberalization are to work with APEC partners to hold the line against any attempt to move backwards on trade liberalization; to maintain a focus on the need for continuing trade liberalization; and to help develop the parameters of any future multilateral trade negotiations on industrial goods.

Trade Facilitation

Against a backdrop of increasing resistance to further trade liberalization due to economic circumstances, Canada continues to work co-operatively with its APEC partners to improve the underlying framework for conducting business in the region. By advancing work on trade facilitation, trade is made easier and less costly; the business environment is more predictable; and networking and partnership opportunities are created. Developing a solid foundation for APEC's trade facilitation program was a priority for Canada last year, and work is proceeding.

The cost of adapting products to new standards, clearing customs, or finding accurate information on regulations can be prohibitive for smaller companies trying to expand into new markets. APEC's work in this area covers a wide range of issues, from customs and standards, to government procurement and intellectual property rights, to business mobility and access to information.

Customs

The APEC subcommittee on customs procedures continued in 1998 to implement and enhance the blueprint to streamline customs procedures by 2000. It strives continually to remove costly impediments to trade in order to encourage trade and investment within the APEC region.