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Backgrounder

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE, TRADE DISPUTES AND INVESTMENT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE (SCFAIT)

In the Government's response to the Sub-Committee's report, Minister Marchi, on behalf of the Government of Canada, expressed his satisfaction with the report's recommendations. The recommendations confirm Canada's approach to date in these negotiations. As well, the Government agrees with all the recommendations. This is especially true of the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1 - *That Canada continue to participate in the negotiations*

The Government is satisfied with this recommendation that "Canada's participation in the negotiations does not commit us to whatever agreement results from the process. The Government will only sign an agreement that fully preserves our freedom of action, at both the federal and provincial levels, on Canadian culture, the environment, labour standards, health, education, social services, Aboriginal programs and programs for minority groups. Simply put, the Government will only accept a MAI that is consistent with our national values and our Canadian approaches to key issues."

Recommendation 2 - *Consultations and informing Canadians*

In November 1997, the Sub-Committee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment held public hearings on the MAI, at the request of the Minister for International Trade. Canadians were invited to appear before the Sub-Committee and submit briefs. In fact, the Government's priority has been to inform the Canadian public. Members of Parliament have been informed extensively, opposition critics have been briefed and numerous press briefings and interviews have been given. Government officials have consulted broadly with the provinces, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. A list of the organizations consulted to date by the Government, as well as background information on the MAI negotiations and Canada's objectives, is available on the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Internet site (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>).

Recommendation 3 - *Involvement of provinces and further parliamentary examination before signing any negotiated agreement*