

GATS Consultation and Outreach Process

Domestic consultations are key to enhancing good governance and transparency and to promoting a democratic approach to trade policy development. Canada's trade policy encompasses interests beyond those of the business world, and all citizens can have a say in determining this policy. Intensive and ongoing consultations on the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) remain an important part of the Government of Canada's overall commitment to ensuring that Canada's position on the GATS continues to reflect the interests of all Canadians.

The government has been seeking, and will continue to seek, the views of Canadians in developing trade policies and positions, using a broad range of consultative mechanisms. These mechanisms include the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (SCEAIT) process, as well as the sectoral

advisory groups on international trade (SAGITs). The government is working closely with provincial and territorial governments, which have jurisdiction in many areas of services trade, to develop and adapt our negotiating positions. Municipalities are also included in the government's consultation and outreach process. Equally important, all interested Canadians are invited to provide their comments and views on the issues via the Government of Canada's Web site for the GATS negotiations (<http://services2000.ic.gc.ca>).

In 2004, the government will engage in another round of cross-sectoral consultations and outreach across the country. These consultations will provide valuable input for ongoing GATS negotiations and also feed into the services-related components of our ongoing bilateral and regional free trade negotiations. The government coordinates with the provinces and territories to hear not only from provincial officials but also

from local business groups and local non-governmental organizations regarding Canada's negotiating position. In addition to ensuring a mutually beneficial dialogue between government officials and stakeholders, the consultations provide a regional dimension and balance to Canadians' input concerning the negotiations.

In the context of the guidelines and procedures reaffirmed at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha in November 2001, the government will continue to consult, inform and engage citizens as the negotiations progress, ensuring that Canada's position on the GATS continues to incorporate the interests of the Canadian public. The government welcomes the views of interested Canadians. To provide your comments, please visit the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Web site at (www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tma-nacl) or the Government of Canada Web site for the GATS negotiations (<http://services2000.ic.gc.ca>).

that the government will allow the offer to become binding at the end of the negotiations only if the outcome is satisfactory for Canada.

At the end of the negotiation process, the results of the bilateral request—offer negotiations will be made available on a most-favoured-nation basis to all WTO members. In this way, all member countries benefit from the bilateral negotiations to some extent, regardless of whether they negotiated market access commitments bilaterally. As well, members retain the flexibility to open the sectors that they choose.

The following sections focus on two services sectors, using them to highlight the sorts of market access challenges facing Canadian services suppliers and the types of improved access Canada is seeking and has offered during the current round of negotiations.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The Canadian professional services sector, led largely by the architectural, engineering and management consulting professions, has experienced continuous