

TRANSPARENCY

Globalization, by increasing the effect on individuals of decisions taken at the global level, has resulted in the heightened interest of citizens in international affairs. Increased interest combined with technological advances have provided greater access to information. The Government has to adapt in order to take full advantage of the opportunities brought about by this new reality. The Government believes that transparency and openness — by providing a vehicle for increasing confidence in public institutions — can contribute greatly to improving the relationship between the governments of the hemisphere and their citizens.

Canada was the first country to release its FTAA negotiating positions, following a Report on the FTAA published by the Committee in March 2000. It has thus been a leader in setting standards for openness and transparency. Canada will continue to work to improve the process of meaningful dissemination of documentation, thereby increasing opportunities for contributions by citizens' groups. In April 2001, in Buenos Aires, hemispheric trade ministers reached a historic turn by endorsing Canada's proposal to release the consolidated draft negotiating texts of the FTAA. These texts are available in all four official languages of the Americas, along with descriptions of the draft chapters and summaries of Canada's positions and proposals, on DFAIT's Trade Negotiations and Agreements Web site (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/menu-e.asp>).

While the Government respects the necessity for confidentiality in negotiations between national governments, Canada is working closely with its hemispheric partners to improve and promote transparency and cooperation with civil society groups during negotiations. Canada has been and remains supportive of approaches to full transparency that safeguard the interests of Canadians and reinforce their confidence in the ability of the Government to reflect their interests and priorities.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Citizen engagement goes beyond presenting the public with the proper documents on the basis of which to form critical opinion. It translates into ongoing consultation processes and initiatives that seek to enhance the capacity of citizens' groups to engage constructively in the policy dialogue at all levels. Different types of consultation and participation mechanisms provide the tools and create opportunities for citizens to exchange views with one another and with the Government. As well, these mechanisms give