

on Canada-US issues. In February 2003, the Canadian Embassy developed a program for parliamentarians accompanying the Prime Minister on an official visit to Mexico which aimed at further strengthening Canada-Mexico parliamentary relations.

The Government also encourages increased engagement between Canadian Parliamentarians and their US and Mexican counterparts at the multilateral level in organizations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) and the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC). A tradition has developed for the Canadian and Mexican delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to hold a joint working lunch during the Assembly's quarterly sessions in Strasbourg.

Recommendation 38

The Government of Canada should propose to the governments of the United States and Mexico the setting up of a small advisory high-level expert panel on the future of the trilateral North American partnership. The panel's mandate would have to be mutually agreed by the governments, and it would have to be given sufficient time to consult widely within the three societies before making its findings public. Such a panel could be asked to conduct an in-depth examination of the feasibility and desirability – notably from the standpoint of democratic transparency and accountability – of options for new trilateral institutions, including:

- *a more permanent secretariat or “commission” to support ongoing work through trilateral summits and other intergovernmental political cooperation;*
- *a permanent NAFTA court on trade and investment;*
- *a North American development fund or financing mechanism.*

The Government believes that the debate on Canada's options in North America should be as open and wide as possible. Deepening interdependence impacts on our society and Canadians expect their government to consult them fully on this issue. We require a consensus on directions to be taken before we commit ourselves to the establishment of new trilateral institutions or programs.

A small, high-level, tri-national expert panel could provide useful input to the current discourse, but discussion needs to be broadly based. As discussed in response to Recommendations 6 and 7, policy makers, academics and think tanks across North America are already seriously studying the implications of integration, often with the Government's support and participation.

