

Threats to cultural identity

The Canadian Conference of the Arts warned that broad free trade arrangements with the United States could pose additional threats to Canada's cultural identity. The Conference advised Ottawa to give serious and careful consideration to all measures presumed protectionist and to non-tariff barriers in the event that they might be of particular importance to some aspect of Canada's cultural sector.

The organization noted that Canada was one of the countries most heavily penetrated or even saturated by foreign -- particularly American -- culture. Because of "our geography and small population, we are hard put to resist the flow of material coming from so proximate and vast a market as the United States." In turn, it is difficult for us not to consider the U.S. as the prime export market for our own cultural goods and services.

Benefits for clothing industry

Peter J. Nygard (Chairman, Nygard International, major Canadian apparel manufacturer) said there is no consensus within the clothing and textile industry. Implementation of a free trade policy for the industry would require a major financial contribution by government. He summarized his presentation with five key points. (1) The focus must be on terms of free trade. (2) Canadian manufacturers must control and dominate certain segments of their domestic market. Import policy must create an advantage and an incentive to the domestic manufacturers. (3) Manufacturers must have easy access to world raw materials, in most cases without restrictions, and must be tariff-free. (4) Government must plan a continuing and increased investment role during the transition. (5) There must be a phase-in period of no less than 10 years for the clothing sector and five years