

### ***Autonomy for self-governing bodies***

Representatives of professional associations had concerns relating to their status as independent or self-governing professions, and about maintaining employment opportunities, income and working conditions for their membership.

### **PRESERVING SOVEREIGNTY, INTEGRATING SOCIAL POLICY OBJECTIVES INTO TRADE AGREEMENTS, AND INCREASING TRANSPARENCY**

Many participants were representatives of non-governmental organizations and public interest groups with passionate concerns on a broad range of issues, such as environmental protection, labour standards, gender equity or social questions (e.g., poverty, homelessness and the adequacy of the social safety net).

One view was that Canada should exercise caution in order to safeguard the right to regulate in the public interest, and that Canada's trade policy should be a vehicle for promoting our social values elsewhere in the world. Several noted that trade agreements are more effectively enforced than those in other areas, and suggested linking existing agreements, such as the International Labour Organization's Declaration on the Fundamental Rights at Work, to progress on liberalization.

*"Previous examples are not encouraging . . . we are nervous because past rulings make us nervous."*

A differing view among these groups was that trade liberalization should be rejected outright because it will inevitably lead to pressures for deregulation or lower standards, and to abandonment of Canadian social values in the interest of economic competitiveness. Some also worried that the government might mistakenly make commitments that would be difficult to correct.

*"The right to take advantage of opportunities should be conditional upon the observance of human rights standards. Are the exemptions in the GATS broad enough that Canada could still boycott services trade with an apartheid regime?"*

*"Trade is not an end in itself. It should be a democratic tool for human welfare."*