

April 23, 1998 No. 97

MARCH 14 1998 PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON MAI GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO

International Trade Minister Sergio Marchi today tabled the Government's response to a House of Commons Sub-Committee report on negotiations for the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

"The Government's response to the Committee's recommendations confirms our commitment to an approach that is both sensitive to, and in keeping with, the interests and concerns raised by the Canadian public," said Mr. Marchi. "Indeed, the parliamentary concerns reflected in the Committee report very much complement the position taken by the Government throughout the MAI negotiations."

At the Minister's request, the all-party Joint Committee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade held public hearings in November on the MAI and submitted its report with recommendations in December 1997. The Government has responded positively to all of these 17 recommendations, which provide useful advice to the Government and its negotiators.

During the hearings, the Sub-Committee heard from more than 20 Canadian witnesses and received over 150 written submissions representing diverse perspectives and a wide range of concerns. A number of experts and spokespersons for national associations also presented their views on the proposed deal.

In its response, the Government reiterates its commitment to continued consultation with Parliament, the provinces and Canadian citizens. Canada will only sign an agreement, with needed reservations, that fully preserves its freedom of action at both the federal and provincial levels, or Canadian citizens, the environment, labour standards, health, education, social services, Aboriginal programs and programs for minority groups.

"In this parliamentary process, I've listened and I've agreed," concludes Minister Marchi. "In these negotiations, there is no time limit. There is only Canada's bottom line, and we will not sign an agreement unless our requirements are met."

The MAI is being negotiated in Paris under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a body that promotes co-operation among the world's 29 major industrialized countries including Canada. The agreement is an attempt to negotiate a multilateral framework of rules for investment.

A back cover is attached.
For further information, media representatives may contact: