

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a general summary of the comments and suggestions that were made during the cross-country consultations held between June and October 2000, to help establish Canada's position for the preliminary General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) negotiations expected to begin some time in 2001. The report provides an overview of the presentations by government officials and a synthesis of the participants' comments.

Two basic groupings of issues, opinions and concerns emerged in the consultations.

First, representatives of business, professional and consumers' associations tended to be favourable to the GATS and focussed their comments on issues such as impediments to cross-border movement; recognition of credentials and maintenance of regulatory standards; and the question of autonomy for self-governing bodies.

Second, non-governmental and public interest organizations tended to be less favourable to the GATS and to trade liberalization. Their comments focussed on the challenges of globalization: the danger of weakening Canada's sovereignty by restricting its right to regulate in the public interest; the need to better integrate our social values into trade agreements; and the need for greater transparency in the negotiation and management of trade agreements.