

liberalization in the areas of agriculture and services plus ways to increase openness in government procurement and to simplify trade procedures. Most importantly, Ministers approved the start of work in the WTO on two new issues of growing importance to the trading system: trade and investment, and trade and competition policy.

- Canada is participating fully in the WTO-sponsored Information Technology Agreement, scheduled to enter into force July 1, 1997, which will result in the removal of duties by the year 2000 on trade in computers, telecommunication equipment and related products in key international markets in Europe and Asia.
- With the successful conclusion of the WTO negotiations, Canadian telecommunication services providers now have multilateral rules for trade and investment, and access to telecommunication markets in 69 countries. The liberalization of this sector will benefit Canadian manufacturers of telecommunication equipment. Telecommunication services directly contribute some \$18 billion or 3.3 per cent of the gross domestic product to the Canadian economy, and account for 145 000 jobs.
- Canada finalized an Agreement with the United States in which the U.S.A. made an unprecedented commitment not to launch any trade actions on softwood lumber exports from Canada for the next five years. The export allocation system implemented by Canada has allowed Canadian suppliers to take advantage of the strong U.S. housing market, which has driven up demand for lumber.

Providing Assistance

Canada's **Trade Commissioner Service (TCS)** is the Government's primary provider of international business development services in international markets, with a mandate to promote and protect Canadian business interests overseas. The TCS offers export-ready clients a range of services, including market intelligence, advice and counselling on foreign markets, partnering and matchmaking with foreign business, and advocacy with foreign governments and business. The TCS also helps Canadian firms overcome information gaps, cultural barriers and other obstacles, thus ensuring their readiness to compete on a level international playing field.

In Canada, the lead domestic Team Canada departments, Industry Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, with the close co-operation and consultation of private sector Team Canada partners, complement overseas efforts primarily by providing Canada-based export assistance and training. All of these services work together to help Canadian companies, whether large or small, succeed in international markets.