

RECOMMENDATION 18:

That the federal government increase its support of, and actively encourage business participation in, the Canada-Europe Round Table for Business (CERT) initiative. The Government should also recommend to CERT that it review its membership fee structure in order to stimulate greater participation by small and medium-sized companies.

The Government of Canada has for some time recognized the potential contribution of a business forum to the Canada-EU relationship. The 1996 Action Plan set out this need, and when CERT was initiated in 1999 the Government actively encouraged and supported its development. The Minister for International Trade has participated in CERT events and has met with its members in both Ottawa and Brussels. DFAIT has funded an intern for the CERT office in Brussels for the last two years and is extending this support for a further year. The Honourable Roy MacLaren, a former Canadian trade minister, was chosen as CERT's Canadian chairman earlier in the year.

The Government has encouraged CERT to structure its membership fees to accommodate small and medium-sized enterprises. Under CERT's current fee structure, the fee for SMEs is \$1500, in contrast to \$15 000 for regular corporate members.