

with important responsibilities that relate to North American issues.

The Government takes note of the suggestion to consider the creation of a special Cabinet Committee on North American Relations, and is continuing to examine all options towards promoting greater strategic direction for Canada's North American agenda. Coherence and coordination among all federal activities is maintained through the existing Cabinet system where all major policy initiatives are reviewed by the Cabinet Committee for Economic Union or the Cabinet Committee for Social Union prior to Cabinet review and approval. The creation of any new Cabinet Committees is the prerogative of the Prime Minister.

A flexible Cabinet Committee system and federal public service is essential. This was most recently demonstrated in response to the post-September 11 environment with the creation of the *ad hoc* Cabinet Committee on Public Security and Anti-Terrorism (PSAT) and the Canadian Borders Task Force in the Privy Council Office (PCO). In 2000, DFAIT was reorganized to create a North America Bureau to assist the Government in addressing continental policy. DFAIT's Assistant Deputy Minister, Americas, convenes regular meetings of senior officials responsible for Canada-US border management issues. In January 2003, DFAIT created a new position, Director General for Interdepartmental Partnerships, responsible for, *inter alia*, outreach to partner departments working on international, including North American, issues. Work is ongoing within the Government to improve coordination of our international activities. The Government is also working in partnership with the provinces and territories to better coordinate the non-federal dimensions of North American relations, as is detailed in response to Recommendation 5.

Recommendation 4

In order to encourage further public engagement focussed on Canadian objectives in North America, the Government should consider convening national and/or regional roundtables on North American relations following the public release of an initial policy statement. Such a consensus-building process should be carried on as warranted by evolving circumstances.

The Government recognizes that public consultation is vital to ensuring that Canadian policies are truly representative of national values and interests. Consultations to date reveal that Canadians accept that we live in an increasingly interconnected world, and that they favour increased economic ties with the United States and Mexico provided that the benefits are distributed widely among our societies and that Canadian values are protected.

The 2002 *Speech from the Throne* reaffirmed the Government's commitment to engage