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# news release

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## GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES UPCOMING RELEASE OF NAFTA ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Honourable Michael Wilson, Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade, and the Honourable Jean Charest, Minister of the Environment, announced today that the environmental review of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) will be released following its consideration by Cabinet.

The interdepartmental committee conducting the review is now in the process of completing its work. Its report will be submitted to Cabinet at the same time as the legal draft of the Agreement, probably about the end of September.

"The release of the environmental review will contribute to informed discussion of the NAFTA," Mr. Wilson said. He noted that environmental issues were carefully addressed in the negotiations for the NAFTA. "The NAFTA includes more environmental provisions than any previous trade agreement, and Canada was an active proponent of these provisions," the Minister added.

Shortly after the negotiations began, Canada initiated the environmental review. "Canada was one of the first countries to require an environmental review of government policies," Mr. Charest said.

The NAFTA Environmental Review Committee had two fundamental objectives. The first was to ensure that environmental considerations be taken into account throughout the NAFTA negotiating process. The second was to document, for consideration by the Cabinet at the same time as the completed Agreement, its potential environmental effects.

Throughout the negotiations, representatives of the committee met regularly with the Canadian negotiating team. Committee members provided guidance on potential environmental effects of the different negotiating options.

Members of the committee also benefitted from the input of the provinces, environmental organizations and individual Canadians. The participation of environmental representatives in the International Trade Advisory Committee (ITAC) and the Sectoral Advisory Groups on International Trade (SAGITS) was particularly helpful in assisting the government to formulate its negotiating positions.

Mr. Charest noted that he will be meeting his counterparts, United States Environmental Protection Agency Administrator William Reilly and Mexican Secretary of Social Development Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta in Washington on September 17, to develop a strategy on continental environmental issues.

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