

VOLUNTARY SERVICE STANDARDS FOR TBT ENQUIRY POINTS

Communication from Canada

The following communication dated 5 July 1999, has been received from the delegation of Canada with the request it be circulated to Members of the Committee.

1. Pursuant to the workshop for representatives of TBT enquiry points held in the fall of 1998, Canada presented a number of proposals to improve the functioning of the notification system of the TBT agreement (G/TBT/W/100 of 17 November 1998). *Inter alia*, we suggested that Members might wish to consider establishing voluntary service standards for their enquiry points setting out acceptable time-frames for acknowledging and providing responses to technical enquiries.

2. For the information of Committee Members, we are pleased to present below the service standards adopted by Canada's TBT enquiry point, the Standards Council of Canada (SCC). Please note that the SCC enquiry point also handles similar enquiries arising under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

I. BENCHMARKS/SERVICE STANDARDS FOR THE WTO/NAFTA ENQUIRY POINT

- (a) Notify WTO/NAFTA federal standards-related measures within 24 hours of receipt of the Federal Gazette, unless access to additional information is required from external sources.
- (b) Notify WTO/NAFTA provincial standards-related measures within 48 hours of receipt of the provincial gazette, unless access to additional information is required from external sources.
- (c) Transmit foreign requests for extension of deadline date for commenting on Canadian WTO/NAFTA notifications within 24 hours of arrival at the SCC and follow up with appropriate Canadian regulatory body if request has not been responded to within 24 hours of transmission.
- (d) Transmit foreign comments on Canadian WTO/NAFTA notifications to the appropriate regulatory within 24 hours of receipt of comments and follow up with regulatory authority if comments have not been responded to within a reasonable length of time.*

* *The average length of time required by Canadian regulatory authorities to respond to comments will be tracked over the next year to better define when the follow-up process should begin.*

- (e) Transmit Canadian comments and/or requests for extension on other WTO/NAFTA notifications to foreign enquiry points within 24 hours of receipt of comments.
 - (f) Input incoming WTO/NAFTA notifications into the SCC database within 24 hours of receipt of notifications.
 - (g) Provide supporting background documentation on notifications within 48 hours of receipt of request.
 - (h) Answer enquiries from foreign enquiry points or acknowledge receipt of an enquiry within 24 hours and complete research enquiries from foreign enquiry points within 72 hours of receipt of request. In cases where a response to an enquiry will not be forthcoming within 72 hours, provide a status report to the enquiry point to indicate reason for delay and indicate time-frame as to when final response will be delivered.
 - (i) Follow up with the WTO Secretariat when Canadian notifications have not been formally issued as an official WTO notification within five working days in order to determine whether clarification on notification is required..
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