



# IGAT INSIDER

*Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade*

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**August 2002 (Issue #3)**

## **National Standards System Conference (March 25-27, 2002)**

What a success! With over 250 participants, the first National Standards System Conference was held at Mont Ste-Anne from March 25-27 2002. Stakeholders from federal and provincial governments, industry, consumer and environmental organizations shared ideas and experiences, learned more about one another's activities and priorities, and left with a renewed enthusiasm to work with one another to advance the cause of standardization in Canada. For conference presentations and outcomes go to: [www.scc.ca/nss/conference\\_e.html](http://www.scc.ca/nss/conference_e.html).



Hugh Krentz, Chair, Standards Council of Canada



## **Inside IGAT**

- **Around the World**

### ***APEC – Establishment of TIC-CAR Database***

The Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) has established a TIC-CAR (Testing, Inspection, Calibration, Certification, Accreditation and Mutual Recognition) database of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs). This online database serves as a source of information about CABs in the APEC region providing testing, inspection, calibration, certification and accreditation services. Registration is voluntary, so to browse the database, visit their Web site at [www.apectic-car.org](http://www.apectic-car.org). Please note that not all organizations listed on the site are accredited, and it is each organization's responsibility to keep their information accurate and up-to-date.

## **RegWatch – Your Eye on Standards in Legislation**

Launched in July 2002, RegWatch is a unique service that monitors changes to Canadian federal legislation for references to Canadian, international and foreign standards. Whether you are government or private industry, RegWatch will serve as a powerful search tool for tracking information on voluntary standards referenced in Canadian federal law.

To subscribe to this service, go to [http://www.scc.ca/online/regwatch\\_e.html](http://www.scc.ca/online/regwatch_e.html) or contact Tanya Burba ([tburba@scc.ca](mailto:tburba@scc.ca)) for more information.

## **International Accreditation Forum (IAF)/International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) Conference on Accreditation in Global Trade**

For the first time ILAC and IAF are jointly holding a conference in Berlin, Germany to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to gain information about conformity assessment and accreditation as it relates to global trade. Speakers from all over the world will gather in Berlin from September 23-25, 2002 to discuss these issues. In conjunction with this conference, the IAF Annual Meeting and the ILAC General Assembly also will be held.

Web sites: <http://www.ilac-iaf-2002.de/>  
<http://www.ilac.org>  
<http://www.iaf.nu>

### **WTO/TBT Meeting**

The World Trade Organization/Technical Barriers to Trade (WTO/TBT) Committee met on March 15, 2002 in Geneva, Switzerland. Key items discussed were:

- **Trade Related Technical Assistance (TRTA) Questionnaire** – The Committee approved this survey to co-ordinate responses on TRTA for developing countries. The survey is expected to be completed within the coming months with the initial findings to be available at the October meeting.
- **Labelling** – Canada presented a formal paper (G/TBT/W/174) to stimulate a discussion on the complex issue of labelling. One of the paper's proposals is an informal workshop to highlight case studies and to discuss members' experiences on labelling. The paper, which was well received, is posted to the WTO Web site and can be searched using the document number listed above.

Web site: <http://www.wto.org>

### **• Regional Organizations**

#### **COPANT**

The Pan American Standards Commission (COPANT) General Assembly was held in Toronto on 2002-05-15. Key outcomes were:

- Carlos Rodríguez (Costa Rica) was elected president-elect for the term 2002-2003.
- The Assembly agreed to study the possibility of signing an agreement between the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and COPANT similar to the Vienna Agreement signed between ISO and the European Committee for Standardization (CEN).
- Kernaghan Webb, from the Office of Consumer Affairs, Industry Canada, gave a presentation – *COPANT and the Consumers* – on the ways to improve communication and coordinate the work of consumer-related standards representatives within the Americas.

The Jamaican Bureau of Standards will host the 2003 General Assembly. No date is set for the meeting.

Web site: <http://www.copant.org>

#### **IAAC**

The policies and procedures for the Interamerican Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC) multilateral agreement (MLA) for Quality Management Systems (QMS) and Laboratories were finalized at the May 3-5, 2002 Working Group 3 (Multilateral Recognition Agreement) meeting in Mexico. Initial applicants for the QMS MLA are expected to be INMETRO (Brazil), EMA (Mexico) and the Standards Council. INMETRO, A2LA (United States) and the Standards Council are expected to be the first applicants of the Laboratories MLA.

Web site: <http://www.ibpinetsp.com.br/iaac/>

## **PAC**

Hosted by the Mexican Accreditation Entity (EMA), the PAC 9<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting will be held on August 4 – 9, 2002 in Acapulco, Mexico. Following the Plenary meeting, a *Peer Evaluators' Workshop for Trainee Peer Evaluators* will be held at the same venue. The purpose of the workshop is to train IAF peer evaluators on the harmonized understanding of ISO/IEC Guides, and related IAF Guidance and the peer evaluation procedures. This workshop is sponsored by APEC, EMA and PAC.

Web site: <http://www.apec-pac.org>

### **• Committee Activities**

## **PTAC**

The Provincial-Territorial Advisory Committee (PTAC) is developing a proposal to survey provincial and territorial government National Standards System (NSS) stakeholders. One of the survey's goals is to gather strategic data regarding standardization issues and concerns from provincial and territorial perspectives. It is envisaged that the findings will help contribute to future Canadian Standards Strategy (CSS) activities.

## **Multilateral Recognition Agreements (MLAs) / Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) 101**

MLAs/MRAs are useful tools for policy makers, regulators, industry and conformity assessment bodies (CABs). Despite their popularity, many people are not familiar with the differences between MRAs or MLAs, and how organizations and regulators may benefit from such agreements. Outlined below is a quick lesson on these agreements.

### **What is an MLA**

ISO/IEC Guide 2, *Standardization and related activities -- General vocabulary*, defines an MLA as a "...*recognition arrangement that covers the acceptance of each other's results by more than two parties*" (ISO/IEC Guide 2, p.62). MLAs are voluntary agreements among accreditation bodies that operate on the basis of the recognition of technical equivalency among signatories. It ensures that procedures meet the requirements of a given standard. An MLA is also a confidence building mechanism as it helps to ensure the competence of CABs in economies importing into the Canadian market, and vice versa.

### **What is an MRA<sup>1</sup>**

The development of voluntary MLAs is mirrored by government-to-government MRAs. MRAs are legally binding, negotiated agreements between governments based on specific regulated products. For example, an MRA allows products such as telecommunications equipment in Canada to be tested and certified here to the export market requirements before the product is shipped (Telecommunications Industry Association, MRA Briefs, p. 2).

### **Benefits of MLAs/MRAs**

Despite the differences between the two, there are many common benefits. These include:

- Reducing barriers to trade.
- Increasing Canadian exporters' access to foreign markets.
- Providing manufacturers with an opportunity to test and certify products one time to the requirements of multiple markets.
- Reducing costs and delays associated with duplicate testing of products.

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<sup>1</sup> Some voluntary standardization organizations use the term MRA to describe their agreements.

- Ensuring that an accreditation body's program is re-evaluated regularly against best practices.

Overall these agreements lower the costs of doing business, and reduce the burden on both industry and regulatory agencies, thereby facilitating trade. MLAs/MRAs do not require signatory countries to harmonize their standards or regulations. Instead, these agreements develop closer and stronger relationships among regulatory authorities and CABs.

## Ensuring Canadian Interests

Two action items in the Canada Standards Strategy (CSS) promote the participation of the SCC in new MLAs (CSS #8 *Move towards a global accreditation regime*); and the development of a framework for entering into MRAs, and ensure that MLA/MRA-related information is available to all interested stakeholders (CSS #9 *Identify and make available to stakeholders the objectives and strategies underlying trade-related MRAs*).

To ensure that these agreements reflect Canadian trade interests and regulatory objectives, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAIT) and the Standards Council have developed criteria for undertaking new negotiations and enhancing existing agreements. The Standards Council's framework provides guidance on entering into voluntary MLAs while the DFAIT framework focuses on government-to-government MRA activities. Both frameworks emphasize – *consistency* between existing regulatory and voluntary agreements, and *consultation and communication* with stakeholders.

The Standards Council framework is available by contacting [ebuce@scc.ca](mailto:ebuce@scc.ca). A copy of the DFAIT document, *A policy framework for Mutual Recognition Activity*, is available from the WTO Web site (<http://www.wto.org> Document Number G/TBT/W/167).

## Canada as a Signatory

Over the past few years, the number of new agreements has grown, and listed on the Standards Council Web site ([http://www.scc.ca/igat/mra\\_e.pdf](http://www.scc.ca/igat/mra_e.pdf)) is an international agreements listing of the over 23 agreements where Canada is a signatory.

## Websites of Interest

European Union – MRAs: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/international/indexb1.htm>

DFAIT – Trade and Negotiations: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/>

Health Products Food Branch (Health Canada) – Background on MRAs covering drug/medicinal products:

[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/inspectorate/background\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/inspectorate/background_e.html)

Telecommunications Industry Association – MRA Basics: <http://www.tiaonline.org/policy/MRAbasics.pdf>

## News

### ***Clean Drinking Water for Latin America and the Caribbean***

The Standards Council and the Canadian Association for Environmental Analytical Laboratories (CAEAL) are helping countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to provide clean, safe drinking water. These two organizations are working with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to provide accreditation services to water testing laboratories, in order to ensure the provision of reliable, accurate testing of drinking water. This voluntary program will be similar to the Standards Council and CAEAL's Canadian laboratory accreditation program, which is based on ISO/IEC 17025, the international standard for technical competence and quality in all areas of testing and calibration. Under the agreement:

- PAHO will apply the program through their Lima, Peru, laboratory, *Centro Panamericano de Ingeniería Sanitaria y Ciencias del Ambiente* (CEPIS), promote it throughout the region, and work with CAEAL to provide site assessment and proficiency testing.
- CAEAL will conduct the site assessments and operate the proficiency testing program in conjunction with CEPIS.
- SCC will accredit the laboratories, based on CAEAL's recommendations.

Go to the SCC Web site [http://www.scc.ca/news/articles/pcw\\_e.html](http://www.scc.ca/news/articles/pcw_e.html) for more information.

## **Canada's Innovation Strategy**

Canada's Innovation Strategy outlines the factors that will drive economic growth and social development over the next decade. This is a long-term commitment requiring partnerships among government, business, academia and citizens to make Canada's future economic potential in the global economy and performance even better. This initiative was officially launched on February 12, 2002.

The strategy is presented in two papers. One paper by Industry Canada, *Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity*, examines the role of innovation in the Canadian economy and proposes goals, targets and federal priorities in the key areas of knowledge performance, skills, the innovation environment and strengthening communities. The second paper by Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC), *Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians* calls for a collaborative approach between all sectors of society to ensure Canadians have the tools they need to participate in Canada's workplace.

Web site <http://www.innovationstrategy.gc.ca>

### **Canada's Innovation Strategy** **How can you be involved**

#### **Attend a Regional Summit (August - October 2002)**

Approximately 40 regional summits will be held across Canada and will focus on local, regional, and national innovation priorities. Check the Web page below as dates and locations are subject to change.

Most of these summits are open to the public.

<http://www.innovationstrategy.gc.ca/cmb/innovation.nsf/MenuE/RegionalSummits>

#### **Submit Comments Directly to the Government of Canada**

You can organize your own discussions at a corporate or community level by filling out the *Do It Yourself Kit*.

<http://www.innovationstrategy.gc.ca/cmb/innovation.nsf/MenuE/DoItYourself>

## **Next Issue**

The November 2002 issue of the *IGAT Insider* will highlight the Standards Council involvement in providing developing countries with technical assistance, which allow these countries to actively participate in global trading activities.

### ***IGAT Insider***

Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (IGAT) is a branch of the Standards Council of Canada. Our role is to strengthen Canadian policy development and strategic participation with respect to international standardization, international trade and intergovernmental cooperation. The *IGAT Insider* is an electronic newsletter published three times a year. The newsletter can be found on the IGAT Web page at [http://www.scc.ca/igat/index\\_e.html](http://www.scc.ca/igat/index_e.html).

We appreciate all suggestions, feedback and questions. Questions and suggestions should be directed to:

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**Canada**

## **Calendar of Events**

Please note that dates may change so check the appropriate Web sites for more information.

### **AUGUST**

4-8 (San Diego, California)  
National Conference of Standards Laboratories  
2002 Annual Workshop & Symposium  
<http://www.ncsli.org>

4-9 (Acapulco, Mexico)  
Pacific Accreditation Co-operation Plenary  
[www.apec-pac.org](http://www.apec-pac.org)

10-14 (Acapulco, Mexico)  
Pacific Accreditation Co-operation  
Peer Evaluators Workshop  
[www.apec-pac.org](http://www.apec-pac.org)

12 - 14 (Acapulco, Mexico)  
4<sup>th</sup> APEC Conference on Standards and Conformance  
<http://www.apecsec.org.sg/>

15-16 (Acapulco, Mexico)  
APEC Subcommittee on Standards and Conformance  
<http://www.apecsec.org.sg/>

### **SEPTEMBER**

15-21 (Berlin, Germany)  
International Accreditation Forum Annual Meeting  
<http://www.iaf.nu>

23-28 (Berlin, Germany)  
International Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation  
General Assembly  
<http://www.ilac.org>

23-24 (Stockholm, Sweden)  
International Organization for Standardization (ISO)/  
Developing Country Matters (DEVCO) Annual Meeting  
<http://www.iso.org>

25-27 (Stockholm, Sweden)  
ISO General Assembly  
<http://www.iso.org>

### **OCTOBER**

2-3 (Geneva, Switzerland)  
WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade  
<http://www.wto.org>

14  
World Standards Day (Activities to be announced.)  
<http://www.scc.ca>

19-25 (Salvador, Brazil)  
Interamerican Accreditation Co-operation Plenary  
<http://www.ibpinetsp.com.br/iaac/>

### **NOVEMBER**

7-8 (Geneva, Switzerland)  
ISO Committee on Conformity Assessment (CASCO)  
<http://www.iso.org>

7-8 (Geneva, Switzerland)  
WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary  
Measures  
<http://www.wto.org>

10 - 15 (Vancouver)  
Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation  
Technical Meetings and General Assembly  
<http://www.aplac.org>