

The industry will match this investment and expend even more effort in pursuing these initiatives.

The creation of the CAF will help to position this industry to take advantage of the opportunities that a wider, more open market presents. The government is pleased to be able to provide the start-up financing needed to create this new organization. The CAF will receive \$4.3 million for set up and establishment of common services that will eventually be self-financing. The CAF will work toward improving the industry's market intelligence, quality, training and work force development. In addition, the CAF has a role to play in developing more value-added products and services, through the integration of our independent entrepreneurs into more effective collaborators in success.

The other element of the campaign is the inter-firm linkages program, which will be co-ordinated by ISTC. This program is intended to help the industry improve its collaborative efforts to improve quality, increase market presence and develop new market opportunities. It will provide \$800,000 in each of the next three years for demonstration projects that are intended to show how small, independent Canadian firms can collaborate to win against larger, integrated, international competitors at home and abroad.

Over the next three years, the inter-firm linkages program will demonstrate ways in which inter-firm collaboration can help suppliers, designers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers across the country to strengthen their competitiveness.

In the United States and Europe, buyers are starting to recognize a Canadian "look." The Toronto Designer Fashion Show, held earlier this month, highlighted some of the talent that is developing this look. This look is an important asset that Canadians must use to distinguish our products at home and abroad. Enhancing the collaboration among independent designers, suppliers, manufacturers, and distributors will be needed to exploit this advantage to the fullest. This is what the linkages program will do. Weston Apparel and its working relationship with TipTop Tailors might be a model of what this program could encourage.

There are many other projects in which the linkages program can help the industry pursue its goals. For example, by acting as a catalyst for the development of industry-wide standards of quality and care, the linkages program can ensure better industry-consumer relations. Another project could entail demonstrating to the apparel sector the value of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), which is sweeping other industries. Similarly, with more effective collaboration, the development and co-operative marketing of recognizable Canadian-designed fabrics could be possible. Equally, the program could help independent