

- a Japanese preference for "natural" wood and stone products;
- the Japanese ability and willingness to pay higher prices for high-quality products;
- recent Japanese government initiatives (review of JAS standards, revision of fire codes for three-storey buildings, etc.) to deregulate the housing sector as one way to reduce housing costs; and
- the Japanese government's goal to offer consumers additional freedom of choice by adopting new housing technologies, regardless of source.

THE ACTION PLAN

Canadian industry needs to be made aware of the dynamic changes taking place in the Japanese housing market, so that they can adapt their products to suit Japanese requirements and promote their products in Japan.

A number of federal and provincial government agencies are ready to assist and support private-sector efforts to penetrate the Japanese market. The Canadian value-added building products industry comprises national, provincial and regional associations, such as the Canadian Manufactured Housing Association (CMHA — an umbrella organization whose members are from the pre-engineered, panelized, log-home and timber-frame housing sectors) and the Canadian Manufactured Housing Institute, which recently established an Export Council to pursue marketing opportunities off-shore.

As an example of federal-provincial activity and co-operation in the area of trade development, building product manufacturers

from the four Atlantic Provinces have come together under an Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency project entitled "Atlantic Canada Home Program," which involves having their products promoted across Japan by means of a series of trade shows and through the building of several model homes in Japan, incorporating design features, furniture and decor items from each of the four Atlantic provinces.

The Export Building Products Initiative of Manitoba is a consortium of building product manufacturers who have co-operated to build a demonstration "Export House," which showcases a number of finished building products of local manufacture. The "Export House" has created a good deal of interest from potential Japanese buyers. The Manitoba group of companies will also be participating in trade development activities in Japan, such as Kobe Interhome 96, to build awareness of Manitoba's building products and to establish business linkages.

Another example of innovative trade development is the initiative launched by the Export Council of Canadian Architecture (ECCA). ECCA is a co-operative effort involving leading Canadian architectural firms and the B.C. Trade and Investment Office. The objective is to promote in the Japanese market the professional services of Canadian companies in the design, planning and architectural fields, areas in which Canadian firms have a competitive edge in terms of experience, design capability and cost.

Building Awareness and Market Knowledge

Activities will include:

- Presentations during annual meetings of industry associations to outline the