

the fastest growing markets in the world. The federal government is taking steps to ensure more Canadian companies do so. For example, in January, External Affairs and International Trade Canada mounted a trade fair in Monterrey, Mexico -- one of the largest solo trade shows ever. Over 200 Canadian companies were represented at the fair and did over three million dollars of business. Of these, more than 90 per cent were small- and medium-sized businesses.

For example, Group C.C.L., a Quebec company that provides linguistic services to business, identified joint ventures and language training services contracts at Monterrey. Hi-point Industries of Bishop's Falls Newfoundland, which produces an oil-spill cleanup product, received an order for \$80,000 and is in line for another of \$150,000 as a result of their participation in the trade fair. With less than 30 employees and sales in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and South America, this company is proof that export markets are not only open to multinational giants. Manufacturing SMEs like Hi-point accounted for fully one fifth of our total exports in 1989, and, in sectors like clothing, food products and wood industries, they accounted for over 50 per cent.

Despite the impression one gets from the media, many companies, global giants and long-established Canadian firms alike, have invested in Canada as a base from which to serve the entire North American market: Proctor and Gamble, GTE Sylvania, Heron Cable, Hughes Aircraft, Kodak, Polymer International, Dow Chemical, Cargill Foods, E.D. Smith, DuPont, Rubbermaid and Nikon Optical, to name just a few. And many are expanding their facilities in Canada to do so. One reflection of this new reality is our record export levels to the United States this year.

The Steering Group's consultations have revealed a convergence of views across the country about how we should adjust to the realities of a global knowledge-based economy. Canadians focused on what individuals, communities and companies must do. While acknowledging there are many things that government can and must do better, they also expressed a desire to be more self-reliant. They agreed that delivering wish lists to government will do little to meet our learning and competitive challenges. On the contrary, they are looking to their communities, companies and associations for mechanisms to develop skills and become more capable competitors. Local development organizations were seen as having a critical role in nurturing small businesses and improving management skills in existing small businesses. Canadians see a key role for you in forging plans for community action to implement the action plan.

Although, like you, I haven't yet seen the action plan, I can assure you that the federal government is prepared to take bold steps to implement the product of this year-long consultation