

The Committee believes that the network of TCS resources abroad is a critical component of the federal government's overall international business development strategy. Given this, we recommend the government:

*Continue to support a strong Trade Commissioner Service overseas. This may be achieved in part through:*

- i. All trade officers receiving more training in priority areas such as business, technology and financing skills;*
- ii. More short-term executive interchanges taking place between the private sector, OGDs (CIDA, Finance, Industry Canada, etc), International Organizations and the Trade Commissioner Service;*
- iii. Encouraging Trade Commissioners to lengthen their postings; and,*
- iv. Supporting Trade Commissioners to seek more secondments to key decision-making positions in International Financial Institutions.*

In order to carry out their jobs in the most effective and efficient manner, Canada-based and locally engaged trade officers must continuously upgrade their skills. Given that there will be increasing demands placed on the TCS in the future, the effective application of technology (management information systems and telecommunications) could be used to raise productivity to accommodate these demands. Training in the use of these technologies is critical. In addition, the training of new Trade Commissioners could be broadened to include an overview of industrial technology.

The Committee believes that public-private interchanges can be of great value to both business and government. We recognize, however, that previous efforts to foster such interchanges have had limited success. In many instances, interchanges are difficult to arrange due to lack of incentives, including both perceived and real re-entry disincentives. The Committee feels that these could be overcome with the appropriate policy changes and that a pilot project of short-term (3 to 12 months) exchanges, perhaps on a project basis with broad applicability, should be pursued.

At present, the rotation process can remove very effective Trade Commissioners from posts and place them in distinctly different positions. The loss is two-fold: the post loses valuable expertise and the Trade Commissioner abandons his/her market or sector specific knowledge, contacts, etc. A process of more coherent career planning whereby a Trade Commissioner focuses on a particular country or region would benefit business. The Committee feels that arrangements should be made to encourage Trade Commissioners to remain at more difficult posts for an extended period of time.