"I think it's all part of the same thing: quality management, quality improvement, just-in-time and quality assurance. The challenge is to train people effectively and thoroughly to implement a verifiable quality assurance system."
> - Malcolm Phillips, Director of Registration, Quality Management Institute (QMI), Mississauga, Ontario.

What is Quality Assurance?

The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Z299 standard defines quality assurance as follows: Quality assurance means all those planned and systematic actions needed to provide adequate confidence that products or services will satisfy specified requirements.

Why a Quality Assurance Program?

Of all the areas discussed in this study of Canadian business and standards, the one proposition that received near unanimous support was that an International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9000 series Quality Assurance Program will be a necessity for doing business in the Europe of the nineties. The ISO 9000 series is the basis for the European Quality Assurance standard: EN 29000.

"The Europeans have taken registration to the ISO 9000 series of Quality Assurance very seriously," says John Kean, President, Canadian Standards Association, "For example, in the U.K., with funding from the British government, small and medium sized enterprises have been able to put in quality management systems and today over 8,000 manufacturers and service organizations are registered. In Canada, we have about 500-600 companies involved in the registration process."

* Many Canadian firms had already either gained business because they had a registered Quality Assurance Program, or lost business because they didn't.

* Many firms had implemented programs in direct response to customer demands.

* The ISO 9000 series of standards is quickly becoming a necessity in many non-European markets as well, e.g. Australia.

* All firms that have implemented a registered Quality Assurance Program report increased productivity and efficiency. Many firms have extended the program to areas not required under the standard because of these increased efficiencies.