

Access to Financing

Ready access to adequate financing is essential to foster business growth and to export successfully. A thorough review will identify shortcomings in existing financing mechanisms facing Canadian companies seeking to expand internationally. The federal government will work closely with financial institutions and business leaders to tackle outstanding financing needs quickly. Issues addressed will include better coordination of existing services, simplifying application procedures, improving access to information on financing possibilities, and the possible creation of new mechanisms to fill gaps in existing services.

Business Networks

Becoming active participants in emerging business networks enables SMEs to be more competitive; they gain the resource advantages of larger firms, without the burden of excessive overhead. The federal government is committed to providing matching grants to encourage greater business network development.

Technology Development and Acquisition

A **Canadian Technology Network** will be established to build upon NRC's Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP). The network will ensure that SMEs have access to the latest information on new technology and an expanded range of advice and services so they can fully exploit new market opportunities.

An **Engineers and Scientists Program** will provide funds for SMEs to hire engineers, technologists, scientists and industrial designers. It will help SMEs fully benefit from technology transfer opportunities and be partners in commercializing new products.

A **Canada Investment Fund** will be created to help ensure an adequate supply of capital for the financing of innovation by leading-edge technology firms. The government is also committed to greater strategic management of its approximately \$6 billion investment in support of domestic science and technology (S&T).

The federal government will support the development of Canada's **"Information Highway"** to connect our major communications and computer networks into a single "network of networks," with the prospect of eventually linking every Canadian home, business, government office, university, library, school, hospital and public institution coast to coast.

Environmental technologies and related services will be a major component of the federal government's strategy for economic growth. A comprehensive strategy is under development, with the international market for products and services an important element. This sector's priority is borne out by the government's commitment to direct 25 percent of all new government funding for R&D to environmental technologies.

The government will also give renewed emphasis to the **Technology Inflow Program (TIP)**, technology export opportunities and the associated activities of Canadian Science Counsellors and Technology Development Officers in our overseas posts to encourage the active adoption of internationally available best practice or leading-edge technologies. It will foster greater teamwork between Canadian offices abroad and the domestic network of technology experts associated with IRAP and the evolving Canadian Technology Network. Canada's international investment strategy should place greater priority on promoting strategic partnering between emerging Canadian technology companies and complementary leading-edge technology enterprises abroad.

To ensure Canadian access to international R&D, **world-class science and research institutions**, in collaboration with knowledge-intensive SMEs, will be encouraged to develop alliances with global research and technology centres abroad, particularly in Europe and Japan. Canada will also monitor the evolving technology policies and practices of other countries, to ensure that Canadian interests are not at a disadvantage, and promote the adoption of leading-edge practices.