reports that the U.S. government's budget for software, computer equipment, and computer-related services is in excess of $8 billion annually, and it is growing by some 4 to 5 percent a year. In particular, the distribution of mainframes in the U.S. federal government by agency is: Department of Defense--44 percent; Department of Energy--14 percent; Department of Transportation--7 percent; NASA--7 percent; all other agencies--28 percent. The distribution of personal computers is roughly 63 percent in Defense, 7 percent in Treasury, four percent in NASA, 3 percent in Agriculture, and 23 percent in all other agencies. In short, these mainframes and PCs represent a significant opportunity for software sales in a wide variety of operating environments.

The following details and suggestions are offered to those Canadian software developers that may wish to pursue procurement opportunities from various U.S. government agencies. First, more specific information on departmental acquisition history can be obtained at a modest price from the **U.S. Federal Procurement Data Center (4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 900, Arlington, VA 22203; phone: 703-235-1326).** Second, purchases of many commercially available products, in amounts up to U.S.$300,000 are administered through Washington, D.C.; other contracts are handled by the regional or local offices of the U.S. federal department or agency.

Third, the Information Resource Management Service (IRMS) of the General Services Administration (GSA) has been given the authority to procure all U.S. federal government information technology. This authority is administered in several ways. Most "common-use" computer products (i.e., hardware, software, and peripherals) procured by two or more U.S. federal government agencies or departments are purchased from schedule contracts negotiated by IRMS. These schedules, which are somewhat similar to standing offers in Canadian federal procurement, are non-mandatory, which means that the U.S. departments and agencies do not have to buy from them. In certain instances, therefore, the IRMS may delegate procurement authority to individual departments if an open-market price provides a better deal.

The first step in bidding for a particular government contract is to submit the Bidders' Mailing List (BML) application form (SF 129) to a specific U.S. government agency. The procedure requires that the seller list the goods and services to be sold and the Federal Supply Classification Code (FSC number) for the goods and services. A procurement officer from the agency then sends copies of bid invitations back to the seller. This can be accomplished by contacting: **Schedules Division, Office of Information Resources Procurement,**