Introduction

Europe 1992 and Technical Barriers to Trade Within the European Community

It is a policy of the European Community (EC) to establish a single internal market by 1992. The elimination of technical barriers to internal trade is a principal objective of that policy. In fact, technical standards, including phytosanitary measures, account for more than half of the 279 legislative initiatives found in the 1985 White Paper of the EC Commission on the completion of the internal market.

Business opinion in the EC has focussed on standards policy as the most important aspect, for them, of the Europe 1992 program. In member states of the EC, national bodies establish various technical standards. The national bodies from EC member states have joint membership with similar bodies from European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries in such regional European standards organizations as CEN, CENELEC, and ETSI. The regional bodies, in turn, provide active, if not dominant, representation for Europe in international standards organizations such as ISO and IEC.

Shared technical standards have the potential to streamline the production, marketing, and technological adaptation of products. In the EC, this potential has been limited despite a highly developed system for achieving standardization.

Technical Barriers to Canadian Trade with the European Community

The technical standards that have limited the market opportunities and competitiveness of Canadian exporters looking to do business in the EC fall into three categories:

- **Voluntary national standards.** In the EC, member states have typically had vastly different voluntary standards for the same product; and, often, those voluntary standards have been generally accepted in those countries as indispensable conditions of purchase.

- **Technical regulations.** EC member states have each created unique technical regulations based on their differing approaches to issues of public concern—that is, health, safety, and environmental protection.

- **Product testing and certification.** As a result of the differences in technical regulations (see above paragraph), the approach and technical requirements for product testing and certification are different in each member state. And although technical standards are being coordinated within Europe, few arrangements have been made regarding the acceptance of alternative testing and certification regimes.