

from the Kansai. And there will be even more with direct air links following the opening of the new Kansai International Airport in September 1994.

Canadian products enjoy a reputation in the Kansai for having top quality and safety (which is especially important for food products). Canada is often thought of as pristine natural wilderness, and as being heavily dependent on the USA for technology. This perception, which overlooks Canada's strong technological capability in software, biotechnology, telecommunications and aerospace is changing as we learn more about each other.

Some major Kansai industries of the past, e.g., shipbuilding, textiles, have become sunset industries. However, diversification is underway, and currently the Kansai is very strong in areas such as: pharmaceutical/biotechnology; new materials, such as ceramics; electronics/robotics; fashion/sporting and consumer goods. Numerous huge world-scale manufacturers are headquartered in the Kansai, such as Matsushita (National, Panasonic), Sharp, Sanyo, Kyocera and Omron.

The dynamic growth in the Kansai offers strong opportunities to Canadian firms. There are over 800 large-scale development projects, with a package of investments over a decade of US\$26 billion. These projects are all designed to give the Kansai the world's finest, state-of-the-art infrastructure. Key development projects include: the Kansai International Airport - opening September 4, 1994, it will be Japan's number one cargo airport, and as the only 24-hour facility, will be a major gateway to Asia; Technoport Osaka - world-class communications, trade/ technology, transportation and recreational centre; Osaka Bay Area Development - complex of bridges, tunnels, and expressways linking up the disparate parts of the megalopolis, now well underway; Kansai Science City - destined to become a world centre for R&D, including basic scientific research; Osaka Dome Stadium - due to open in 1997.

Canadian companies should remember that, contrary to the accepted view, Japan is not necessarily a homogeneous market. There are distinct regional differences, especially with regard to the Kansai. They should also remember that Japan's labour shortage in sectors such as construction create new opportunities for imports; that there are in Japan increasingly more open attitudes to imports; and that although Japanese standards for quality and delivery are sometimes so severe as to appear ridiculous, meeting these norms will boost competitiveness not only in Japan but also in other difficult third country markets.