

The Government of Canada looks forward to working with its partners in labour, business and the education community in implementing the Action Plan. We will provide leadership in the manner in which the Conference Board's report defines total quality leadership: the responsibility to facilitate, rather than control.

A leader, the report tells us, must define the framework in which individuals and teams work; a leader must establish the code of conduct to be followed; and a leader must act in a way that sets an example, and sends a signal to others.

There is another way in which the federal government can provide leadership. We are considering adopting the International Standards Organization's 9000 (ISO 9000) series of quality standards for government purchases. By doing so we would be promoting greater adherence to a TQC. ISO 9000 is a rigorous set of quality standards that apply to some 20 functions within a company. As a recent *Businessweek* article pointed out, ISO 9000 certification is increasingly becoming essential for gaining access to the European and other markets.

My colleague, the Honourable Paul Dick, Minister of Supply and Services, and I want to explore whether the federal government's procurement policies can be used to spur on the adoption of these standards in Canada. If we can find a formula that makes sense and is fair to Canadian suppliers, it could be a major impetus in increasing the spread of quality practices by Canadian business that would, in turn, have a very positive impact on our competitive position. We intend to pursue our very preliminary discussions on this complex issue in the coming months.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Government of Canada strongly believes that a real commitment to quality must be a key element in maintaining and enhancing our competitiveness in a high-wage country. The private sector must share that sense of commitment if we are to succeed.

I firmly believe that support of the Canadian Network for Total Quality, combined with the central work of the NQI, will place Canada on the road to a quality future. I am equally convinced that the increased quality focus, in all aspects of the CABE, will spread support for quality throughout the private sector. So I see today's initiatives as a very effective way in which the government can play its role in supporting the spread of the quality principles. We know that some in the private sector have already covered considerable distance in implementing total quality; you have been motivated by the demands of the marketplace.