

3. Redefining the role of government R&D

ii) NRC's Technical Information System (TIS)

It may be desirable to modify the source base of TIS, and CISTI, through cooperation with agencies such as the Patent Office and the Trade Commissioner and Science Counsellor Network.

It has also been suggested that the TIS be made more readily available to small businesses. This goal might be achieved through decentralized, computer-linked regional offices. This could be achieved through cooperation with the Provincial Research Organization offices and other innovation centres.

iii) The Patent Office

Some industry representatives have suggested that the services of the Patent Office be more widely publicized in order to increase the effectiveness of the office. It is desirable to increase the number of Canadian patent application (Appendix B).

iv) Trade Commissioner and Science Counsellor Network

The main function of the Trade Commissioner Service is to assist Canadian businesses to market their goods and services abroad.

Science Counsellors are responsible for monitoring new S&T developments and foreign government policy trends abroad. This information is channelled to the relevant government departments.

Both of these services are operated by the Department of External Affairs. A pro-active approach by both services maximizes their effectiveness.

The Science Council of Canada recently issued a comprehensive statement on The Canadian Science Counsellors.

Suggestions for the improvement of the Trade Commissioner System have focused on increased publicity of services available and recognition of the expertise required by the post.

A. BACKGROUND

The Federal government spends about \$2 billion annually in federal scientific establishments and employs approximately 8,000 scientists and engineers in natural sciences activities. Some 13 different government departments and agencies are responsible for directing the research and development carried out within these laboratories (Appendix F). They represent an important national source of innovative ideas, technology transfer, information and advice.

Activity in federal laboratories is very diverse, covering support for regulatory activities, standard setting, environmental protection and advanced research. Many also have industrial support as an integral part of their mission. In these cases, it is particularly important that the related R&D activities be relevant to industry needs.

For over a decade, this relevance has been questioned. In particular, the recent Task Force on Federal Policies and Programs for Technology Development made specific recommendations towards clarifying the objectives of these laboratories.

Several issues for achieving this goal have been identified:

- i) Consideration of a more effective review mechanism for S&T issues within the committee system of the House of Commons
- ii) A re-examination of current contracting out policies within Federal R&D laboratories.
- iii) Facilitate the involvement of the private sector and Provincial governments in the management of Federal in-house R&D activities
- iv) Determination of whether a need exists for a mechanism of assessment and approval of all Federal R&D activities
- v) Encourage closer links between Federal and Provincial R&D efforts.