

element of this review process, the National Advisory Board on Science and Technology (NABST) Report, *Healthy, Wealthy and Wise*, and the Government's response to the report, underlined the inherent international nature of Canada's S&T interests and endeavours.

The Government's main S&T objective, within an international business context, is to support and enhance the international performance of Canadian SMEs. To better serve Canadian firms, federal departments and agencies will be encouraged to develop strategies to promote S&T collaboration, and to gather and disseminate international S&T intelligence more effectively.

Government's priorities in this area include:

- *Improving Technology Intelligence, Acquisition and Dissemination*

Firms must be agile and responsive to rapidly changing client needs, market conditions, standards, regulations and technological trends in order to preserve and expand their domestic and export market shares. Canada's network of science and technology counsellors, technology development officers and commercial officers will therefore more specifically focus on responding to the needs of Canadian firms — by improving the dissemination of technology intelligence to firms; helping companies identify and exploit emerging technology and business opportunities; and alerting firms to impending business threats.

- *Acquiring Best-practice Technologies*

Firms need external benchmarks against which they can compare their own processes and operations, and assess their unique efficiencies and capabilities. Such information is essential to developing a strategic plan for long-term growth. Government departments and agencies will therefore work together in helping firms to identify best-practice technologies that can help them compete successfully.

- *Encouraging Foreign Technology Acquisition*

While Canadian scientists and engineers have pioneered many significant world-class innovations, only a small portion of scientific knowledge and technologies in use in the world today can be directly attributed to Canadian R&D efforts. In fact, it is often more economical and efficient for Canadian firms to acquire technology from abroad. Government will therefore improve its capacity to work with smaller firms to help them identify, assess and acquire technologies that can further their business interests.

- *Expanding the Canadian Technology Network*

The Canadian Technology Network is being established to provide Canadian SMEs with quick, easy access to a broad array of services that will address their technology concerns. As of early 1996, over 300 Canadian member organizations were involved, each of which can help client firms in specific technical or related business areas. Development of an international component of the Network will allow members and clients to tap worldwide sources of technologies and business information.

- *Setting Industrial Standards*

Canada's participation in international standards-setting initiatives is being rationalized in order to: improve dissemination of advanced information to Canadian firms; provide companies with better opportunities to influence developing international standards; and facilitate international accreditation of Canadian products.

- *Expanding Science and Technology Awareness*

Science and technology awareness plays a significant role in the export performance of many SMEs. Foreign perceptions of Canada's S&T capabilities also affect the flow of investments from abroad. The Government and its private-sector partners will address this twofold challenge by promoting S&T at home and abroad in all appropriate forums.

- *Encouraging International Research and Development*

Government will continue to develop international arrangements that allow Canadian private- and public-sector institutions to participate in international R&D programs. A recent example is the Canada-European Community Agreement for Scientific and Technological Co-operation. The Agreement facilitates the participation of Canadian firms, universities and research institutes in European R&D consortia established under the European Union Program on Research and Technological Development.

Government, on a selective basis, will continue to support co-operative initiatives with various countries. Current priorities include expanding industrial R&D co-operation with Germany, seeking co-operation in strategic sectors with Japan, and furthering the private-sector Canada-Israel Industrial R&D Foundation.