

Two specific federal government programs provide the catalyst for InvestTech '90: The Technology Inflow Program and the Investment Development Program.

The Quest For New Technology

The Technology Inflow Program (TIP) was developed by External Affairs and International Trade Canada (EAITC) in 1986. TIP is designed to help Canadian companies to gain access to leading edge technology from abroad to improve their competitiveness at home and in export markets.

TIP helps Canadian businesses in two ways. First, it offers information and advice on foreign sources of technology through its specialized advisory services. Secondly, it provides financial assistance to qualifying companies to help defray the costs of travelling abroad to obtain these technologies.

Last year, TIP financially assisted more than 600 Canadian companies in establishing technology inflow projects. Most of these companies were small businesses. In most cases, the necessary funds (less than \$10,000) were quickly authorized by the National Research Council Canada's (NRCC) Industrial Research Assistance Program, delegated by EAITC to deliver TIP regionally. Funding for larger projects is approved by an interdepartmental committee in Ottawa.

One company which received TIP assistance is Neptune Leather Canada Ltd. of Shelburne County in Nova Scotia. Thanks to TIP, Neptune Leather's president, Robin Fulton, was able to travel to Australia to observe first-hand how to process fish skins into a pliable "leather". Today, the company is one of only six in the world manufacturing this product.

Neptune's fish leather is making waves among high-fashion designers and couturiers in Canada, the U.S., and Europe. One major U.S. design house has offered to buy half of Neptune's production to make a line of fashion belts retailing at several hundred dollars each.