

The third part of our total quality approach involves one of the responsibilities of the National Quality Initiative. The Canada Awards for Business Excellence will be jointly conducted by Industry, Science and Technology Canada (ISTC) and the NQI next year, with major responsibility for the program being transferred to NQI in 1994.

Part of the strength of CAFE has been the manner in which winners have been judged by their peers. They are selected by independent panels of private sector experts and senior business executives. ISTC has been proud to administer the awards since they were first introduced in 1984. They have grown to become synonymous with the best in Canadian business. By transferring major responsibility for the CAFE awards over to the National Quality Initiative, we are acknowledging that the awards have come of age. While ISTC will continue to be involved in the adjudication process, the NQI will be responsible for the promotion of all categories of the current awards.

Our objective in each of these inter-related announcements is to place the NQI in a position to highlight the importance of a total quality commitment to improving our competitive position. By enhancing the focus on quality in every category of the CAFE, the NQI will be pursuing this objective. Through the CNTQ and the NQI, Canadian organizations will have access to the skills they need to develop quality practices. Both of these bodies will pay particular attention to the need for small- and medium-sized enterprises to obtain information and advice on how to apply best management practices.

These three announcements -- the Canadian Network for Total Quality, the National Quality Initiative, and the transfer of the Canada Awards for Business Excellence to the National Quality Initiative -- reflect the advice the Steering Group received throughout the Prosperity Initiative. The Steering Group's Action Plan will be released tomorrow, but I am pleased to make these announcements today, both because this audience has shown such a commitment to Total Quality, and because the CAFE is so important to this overall quality approach.

Throughout the Prosperity Initiative, we have said that the Government would not hesitate to implement good ideas as they emerged from the Prosperity consultations. The National Quality Initiative was clearly such an idea.

In announcing it today, I would also like to pay tribute to the Prosperity Initiative's Steering Group for the work they undertook to bring the idea to light. Tomorrow, the Steering Group will outline more ideas on how Canadians can work together to prepare Canada for the 21st Century.