International Institutions

Canada attaches high priority to the work of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and will continue to promote further trade liberalization within this forum. Canadian priorities will build on the post-Uruguay Round trade agenda and centre on the issues of environment, investment, competition, technology and telecommunications.

The Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum is an increasingly important vehicle for helping existing international rules work better while contributing to the development of the agenda for the next round of multilateral trade negotiations. Canada will therefore work within APEC to increase regional understanding of trade policy matters and further the cause of freer trade and investment worldwide.

Canada is a major contributor to various multilateral development banks, including the World Bank and various regional development banks. The Government is currently looking at a range of options to improve Canada's participation and performance in the procurement business associated with these institutions.

Domestic Initiatives in Support of International Business

Support for Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises

Improved access to foreign markets is critical. But Canadian companies themselves must have the capability to seize promising trade, technology and investment opportunities as they arise. The Government will therefore encourage more Canadian SMEs to become active exporters and explore international investment partnerships. Government support for SMEs will focus on providing firms with market intelligence on export opportunities, investment, strategic alliances, technology transfer, market access and competitiveness issues.

Private-sector Involvement

Ensuring that government resources devoted to international business development meet the needs of Canadian industry is essential to achieving Canada's economic growth objectives. The Government will expand private-sector involvement in its trade fairs and missions program and encourage SMEs to become active exporters by focussing Program for Export Market Development (PEMD) resources on firms with annual sales of less than $10 million. Industry involvement in the preparation of The International Trade Business Plan (ITBP) will be increased. Other initiatives will be pursued in the areas of export preparation, service sector SMEs, export financing, international investment and technology partnerships.

Government Co-ordination and Co-operation

Better co-ordination between governments is critical to Canada's international business development efforts. A major objective will be to increase efficiency through enhanced co-operation among all levels of government. The federal government will work with provincial governments to implement and improve the Internal Trade Agreement to eliminate barriers to trade, investment and mobility in Canada. The "Team Canada" approach to international business development will be pursued. Efforts will be made to integrate the representation of the federal and provincial governments outside of Canada, and to establish "one-stop shops" for all federal and provincial international business development activities domestically. In addition, the ITBP will be strengthened by expanding participation by provincial governments and linking government resource allocation decisions to the Plan.

International Science and Technology Objectives

The development and acquisition of best-practice process and product technologies is critical to ensuring that Canadian firms are competitive in world markets. The Government's priorities