

recognize that our resources are extremely pinched and that our efforts must be carefully targeted.

The private sector has been asking that government market development programs be made more effective and accessible. In particular, you asked that we concentrate our efforts on program delivery abroad by providing export incentive programs and export financing to meet the global competition.

There was also stress on the need for timely market intelligence. In this regard, I would wish to have your views on where our priorities should be -- on funded programs or on market intelligence. You can help us by telling us what your needs are and by providing feedback on the usefulness of the information that is being provided.

Last September, I convened a meeting of our trade commissioners in Ottawa to examine issues that are integral to the current mandate and future relevance of the Trade Commissioner Service. Work has already begun on three of the key issues that were identified. One of these issues is market intelligence, to which I have just referred. In addition, working groups are currently examining the issues of "best practices" and level of services.

In response to the private sector's desire to see the trade development programs and the efforts of the government made more effective, we have created the International Trade Business Plan. This Plan summarizes the activities and projects that the federal government intends to undertake to support the development of international affairs.

This Plan is designed as much for you as for the government. From our point of view, it will lead to more rational ways of using the government's resources in pursuit of our interests on the international markets. From your point of view, it will allow you better to align your own priorities and plan the activities that you would like to carry out jointly with us. The Plan has been the subject of discussions with your association and the private sector in general; the second version, now being prepared, will generally reflect the views you have expressed.

With respect to export financing, all our consultations with the private sector have stressed the need to keep our financing and insurance instruments competitive. The Export Development Corporation (EDC)'s client surveys also indicated the need for enhanced services. As a result, the government will soon be introducing amendments to the Export Development Act. The intent of this Bill will be to re-define the Corporation's mandate in a way that would give it greater flexibility to support Canadian international business activities.

Our proposals for change to the EDC's governing legislation have been designed to allow the EDC to support you as you face the challenges of globalization in an increasingly competitive world.