

Partnership among businesses, possibly in the form of business networks or strategic alliances, was another theme from the consultations. Many recognized that smaller firms can overcome the limitations of size and improve their competitiveness by working together on projects such as common purchasing, joint marketing and export development, and training of staff. Equally, Canadians wanted to see an end to duplication of government programs, and closer collaboration of all governments to ensure effectiveness of new programs.

Canada's education system was seen as in need of improvement if it is to produce the innovators, entrepreneurs, investors and, most important, the skilled work force of the future through the continuous upgrading of skills. Partnerships between business, labour and schools, to provide the training, and a vast increase in the number and quality of co-operative education programs, was suggested. Programs to bring the academic and business worlds together would provide small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with access to research and development expertise. Training partnerships can provide training, to ensure that their workers are able to compete with the best in the world. These will be increasingly important competitive factors in the knowledge-based economy of the future. You all can play a key role in nurturing these kinds of partnerships among your own local stakeholders.

In this vein, the co-operation between your organization and the federal government is a model worth emulating in other fields and expanding wherever possible. As you know, your membership has proven a rich source of personnel for our investment counsellor positions abroad. Starting with John Morand in New York and Pierre Belanger in Paris, our current roster includes Matt Fischer in Los Angeles, Frank Hess in Bonn and Pierre Boulanger in Paris. And the flow is not all one-way -- Bob Fournier of my office was the original proponent and incumbent of the federal government position on your board. This is concrete evidence of the importance I attach to your collaboration in our joint efforts to attract investment to Canada.

Both Matt Fischer in Los Angeles and David Lenihan, our investment counsellor in New York, have hosted some of you at investment development seminars, and both have worked closely with many of you to find participants in matchmaking events.

Further evidence of the successful co-operation between federal investment officers and your members are Reisser Screws' recent investment in Thunder Bay and the recent deal between Cyberworks of Orillia and Excel Machine Tools of Singapore. Our Bonn investment counsellor, Investment Canada, and Dick Charbonneau's Thunder Bay Economic Development Corporation worked together to attract Reisser Screws and provide it with ongoing support. The investor recently told me that the service we provided and the access to the U.S. market provided by the Canada-U.S. Free Trade