

international technology consortia. There are also indications that our major trading partners are giving more attention to stimulating industrial innovation driven by concerns over trade imbalances, particularly with Japan.

We know that Canadian firms need a certain degree of innovative capacity in order to absorb new technology. Ensuring greater access to sources of leading edge technology would be self-defeating if firms lack the ability or interest to absorb and commercialize such information, as suggested by the results of a survey of clients of science-based departments and agencies (SBDAs).⁸² Although an essential first step, ensuring access does not automatically ensure benefits. In order to gain a better understanding of the concerns of industry and the S&T community in general on this issue, EAITC, in partnership with ISC, would need to conduct, or contract out, a professional survey of the research community's opinion, with emphasis on those who commercialize technology.⁸³

From the perspective of Science Based Departments and Agencies (SBDAs), the issue of participation in international R&D networks is extremely important and should receive far more prominence on the trade policy agenda.⁸⁴ With respect to Canada's S&T strategy, the Council of Science and Technology Ministers released a National Science and Technology Framework for Action in May 1991 which called for the "promotion of strategic partnering and cooperation in R&D, both domestically and internationally, between private companies, universities and federal and provincial government institutes...".⁸⁵ Similarly, Inventing our Future, Canada's action plan for prosperity, calls for a "coordinated global trade, investment and technology strategy led by the private sector to increase exports, double the number of firms exporting and promote strategic alliances."

⁸² The results suggested that for SMEs, the lack of technologically trained individuals, capable of absorbing and applying S&T knowledge from government and other sources to stimulate the product development necessary for their companies' continuing viability, is particularly crucial: ISTC, Federal S&T Alliances Report (1992), p. 22.

⁸³ Some work of this nature has already been done. For example, the aforementioned report on federal S&T alliances collected data from twenty-nine science departments and agencies on more than eight thousand alliances to establish a data base. Unfortunately, only the clients of these SBDAs were surveyed for their opinions and the questionnaire was designed to survey their opinions about domestic consortia only. To get a fuller picture, the sample should be extended to a more representative sample of Canadian high-technology firms, perhaps selected randomly, although this would depend on the appropriate sampling methodology as approved by Statistics Canada. See the relevant Treasury Board Directive on public opinion surveys.

⁸⁴ From conversations with ISC officers and NRC officials.

⁸⁵ Canadian Science and Technology: Moving Forward to Cooperate with the R&TD Programs of the European Community, Government of Canada (June 30, 1992), p. 16.