

with the competition. There are hungry and tough competitors who are working hard to beat us wherever they can.

All industries are coming to recognize that labour skills enhancement can be a key factor in improving productivity. The mission, I mentioned earlier, found that Europeans have more mechanized processing. They also found that this mechanization requires greater skills training programs which can help workers adapt to and accept change. With enhanced skills and productivity, the wage structure in European fish processing plants is higher than here.

Co-operation among companies -- and between labour and management within companies -- and long-term strategic planning in this area can also lead to improvements in productivity, product quality and security of market position leading to more secure employment. We recently saw an example of just such forward-looking co-operation. Last March, for the first time, the Fisheries Council of Canada and representatives of labour, processors, trade groups and academe held a national round table discussion about the human resource development challenges facing your sector. This meeting helped to lay the groundwork for addressing these challenges. ISTC will be convening a series of follow-up regional meetings to develop a plan of action for human resource development in the sector.

Many companies in your industry -- lead by the efforts of the Fisheries Council of Canada -- are already looking for ways they can work together to tap emerging market opportunities. One measure which is helping to do just that is the recently formed Fishery Products Technology Consortium -- created with the help of ISTC.

Strategic partnerships can extend beyond the bounds of the traditional industry as we have known it. For example, Dave Nichols, the President of Loblaws International Merchants of Canada, has suggested the seafood industry should see strategic partnerships as not just links among themselves. He sees many mutual advantages to partnerships between retailers like him and seafood processors, especially in the area of product development.

Retailers could bring to such a partnership an accurate sense of the consumer's needs. Processors can bring their own processing and international marketing experience to this partnership. Perhaps this would lead to a higher, more stable, demand for your product, improved quality, better price and -- overall -- a more productive use of an important renewable resource. The net result would be an industry which is much more market-driven rather than production-driven.