

To better understand the needs and concerns of SME business people, trends in the correspondence received by the Departments from businesses across Canada were assessed. Also, related issues and concerns under review by other areas of Government were considered. In addition, the following industry associations were consulted: Canadian Exporters' Association, Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, Canadian Advanced Technology Association of Canada, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and Canadian Manufacturers' Association. Other interested parties also were involved in identifying the requirements of SME businesses.

It was time to take action. Two sub-committees were formed: issues of **domestic** debt and equity financing to SMEs were to be examined by a committee chaired by Paul Toriel of Industry Canada. Issues involving SME exporters, including export financing were to be addressed by a committee chaired by Roger Ferland of DFAIT.

BUDGET COMMITMENT

On February 22, 1994, the Government made the following commitment in its first budget speech:

"...the Minister of International Trade and I (Minister of Finance) will be convening a meeting as soon as possible of the heads of the major Canadian banks and the Export Development Corporation to seek an enhanced means of furthering the capacity of small business to export."

THE MEETING OF MAY 6, 1994

On May 6, 1994, the Honourable Ministers MacLaren, Martin, and Manley, respectively Ministers for International Trade, Finance, and Industry, convened a meeting with the heads of 13 banks and other financial institutions, including EDC, to address the Budget Speech commitment. (See Annex II).