

Monthly requests have risen from about 20 000 in May 1997 to almost 80 000 in February 1998.

The enhanced access to exporter services also includes the **national toll-free 1-888-811-1119 number**, which connects callers to Team Canada Inc's Export Information Service and onward to other Team Canada Inc IBD service providers across the country. A "fax back" system operates 24 hours a day.

- **International Trade Centres** across the country played a lead role in establishing and consolidating Regional Trade Networks with provincial participation.
- Now in their third year of operation, **Regional Trade Networks** streamline trade and export service delivery by linking federal and provincial departments and agencies and the private sector at the local level. In 1997, the Networks identified over 3000 companies for export counselling, of which 200 sought to diversify their export markets. The Networks have developed rolling three-year regional trade plans and set a national objective of assisting 6250 first-time and new-to-market exporters over the next three years.
- The **New Exporters Training and Counselling Program (NEXPRO)** is designed by the Business Development Bank of Canada for owners and managers of small businesses who lack the knowledge and experience necessary for the export process. A total of 350 business persons took training sessions within 17 NEXPRO projects in 1997-98.
- In 1997, the **Forum for International Trade Training (FITT)** became Canada's first and only organization to grant a professional designation in international trade, the Certified International Trade Professional. Since January 1998, FITT has certified 18 international trade professionals; since 1992, FITT has trained over 3500 individuals in international trade.
- 1997 marked the 15th year of the **Canada Export Awards**. Minister Marchi honoured 10 Canadian firms, ranging from SMEs to multinationals, for their excellence in exporting. The awards serve as an inspiration to other Canadian firms to achieve and expand their own beachheads in foreign markets.

3.3 International Market Development

Sources of Strategic Guidance

- **National Sector Teams** co-ordinate public and private sector IBD efforts at the sectoral level. Through the creation of new Country-Sector Working Groups, each Team worked with Canada's trade commissioners abroad to plan