

plan. This prompted the task force to publish a report, *A Call for Action*, four months early. The report placed responsibility on the private sector for getting its systems in order. It also recommended that both governments and businesses take steps to prompt action.

The task force and Industry Canada launched a \$4-million communications campaign to get firms to act. They used advertising, direct mailings, an enhanced Web site, a 1-800 telephone help line, seminars, and press conferences, targeted at individual business sectors. The Business Council on National Issues, acting on a task force recommendation, sponsored a workshop on U.S.-Canada cross-border links. The Business Development Bank of Canada has launched a \$50-million loan campaign to help small and medium-size firms prepare their computers for the year 2000.

To address the federal government's own millennium bug problem, the Year 2000 project office was established within the Treasury Board Secretariat in 1996 to co-ordinate and monitor activity across all departments and agencies. The project office is helping to find ways of dealing with the bug and develop common approaches. The government systems delivering services that affect the health, safety, security and economic well-being of Canadians have priority, to ensure uninterrupted government service in key areas.

Electronic Commerce

Electronic commerce has potential as a vehicle of global trade, a generator of high quality jobs, and a boon for consumers, enabling people to buy products and services from around the world. Canadian businesses are expected to be conducting millions of electronic transactions by 2000 and there is tremendous capacity for expansion as consumers increasingly purchase goods and services on the Internet. The World Trade Organization (WTO) estimates that the value of cyber-trade will exceed \$300 billion US by 2000.

As part of its Connecting Canadians initiative, the Government of Canada has launched a comprehensive strategy to develop electronic commerce. Domestically, the government is working with the provinces and territories, the private sector and other stakeholders on a policy framework to build trust, clarify rules and provide access to the Internet. Initiatives are under way dealing with security, privacy, consumer protection, intellectual property, taxation, standards and skills development.

Canada is working with the international community to establish a global environment that will ensure consumer acceptance of electronic commerce and business growth. To this end, Canada is actively engaged with the G-8, the WTO, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In Ottawa, in October